

ST

FROM THE PUBLISHERS OF ST WORLD
VOLUME 1 ISSUE 2 JUNE 1988
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ACTION

THE WORLD'S ONLY DEDICATED
ST GAMES MAGAZINE

**STA MEGATEST:
NINE MOTOR RACING GAMES
COMPARED**

36 GAMES REVIEWED!

CARRIER COMMAND
CAPTAIN BLOOD
BUGGY BOY
OBLITERATOR
TIME AND MAGIK
CRASH GARRETT
IKARI WARRIORS
SCRABBLE DE LUXE,
WARHAWK, I, BALL, POOL
CHOPPER X, BATTLESHIPS
STAFF, THRUST, DARK CASTLE
PINK PANTHER, SOCCER
RETURN TO GENESIS, BMX SIM
MISSION GENOCIDE, SPITFIRE 40
SPIDERTRONIC, WARLOCK'S QUEST
VAMPIRE'S EMPIRE, TAU CETI, DARK CASTLE



FEATURES:

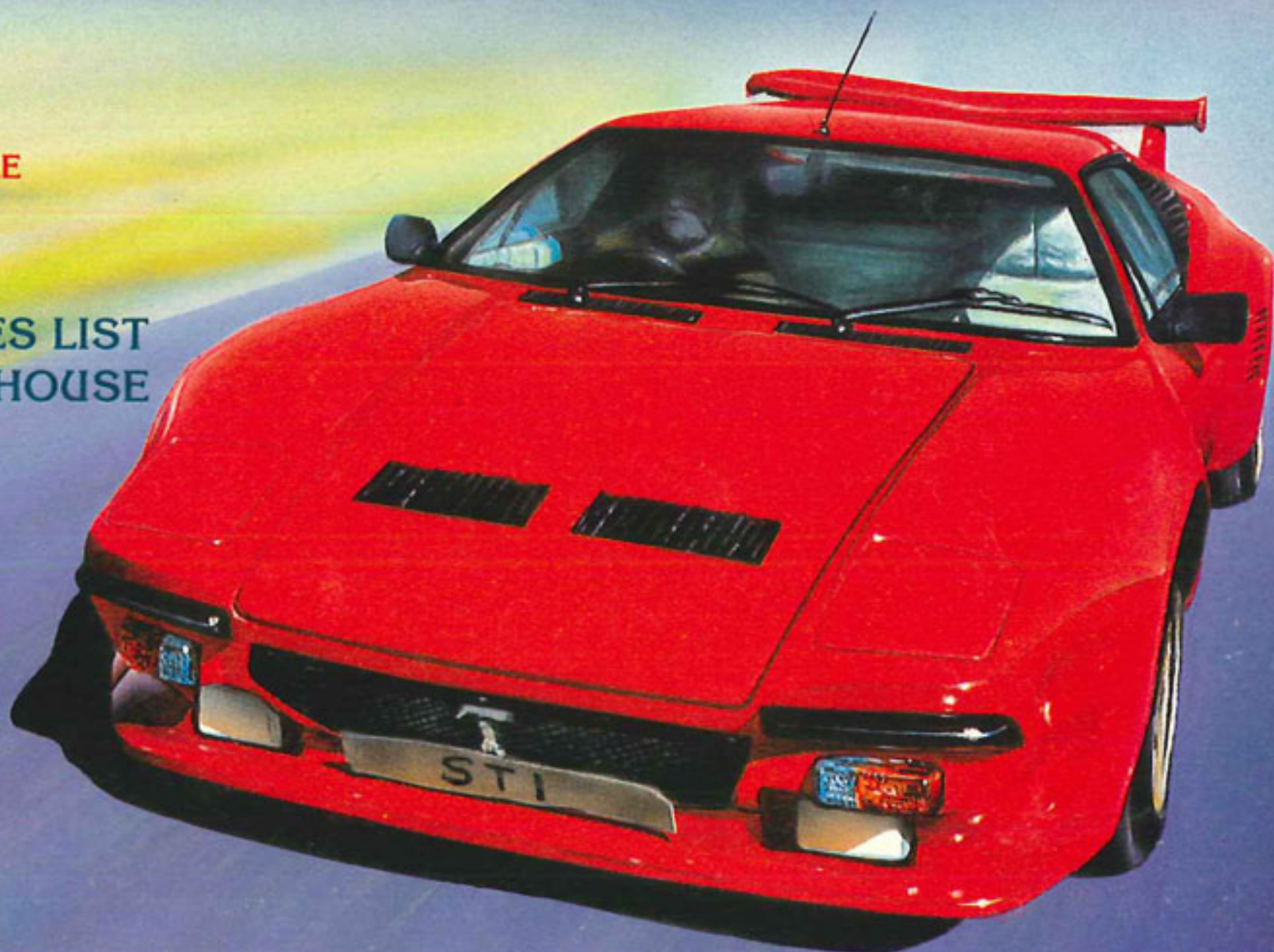
THE 2ND PART OF OUR ST GAMES LIST
HOW U.S. GOLD BECAME A TOP HOUSE

REGULARS:

EXCLUSIVE NEWS STORIES
NEW ARCADE REVIEWS COLUMN
MORE HINTS AND TIPS
INCLUDING INFINITE LIVES FOR:
PROHIBITION, TNT, GUNSHIP,
EAGLE'S NEST

COMPETITIONS:

WIN: A SOLAR-POWERED WALKMAN
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Stein

Hack'n'slash and Shoot-em-up

The advertisement features a large, stylized title 'RIMRUNNER' in yellow with a red outline, set against a blue background. Below the title, a brown, segmented alien robot stands next to a green, reptilian creature holding a black rifle. In the foreground, a black game box for 'BARBARIAN The Ultimate Warrior' is shown at an angle. The box art depicts a muscular barbarian in a desert landscape. Text on the box includes 'ATARI ST 520/1040' and 'FREE POSTER INSIDE'. Two small inset images show game play: one for 'RIMRUNNER' with a score of 1780 and energy levels, and another for 'BARBARIAN' showing a character in a green landscape.

Hit that fire button hard to survive in **Rimrunner**.

The latest game from Palace is a manic shoot-em-up for the Atari ST.

Now available for the Amiga and the ST – **Barbarian The Ultimate Warrior**, the classic hack'n'slash game.

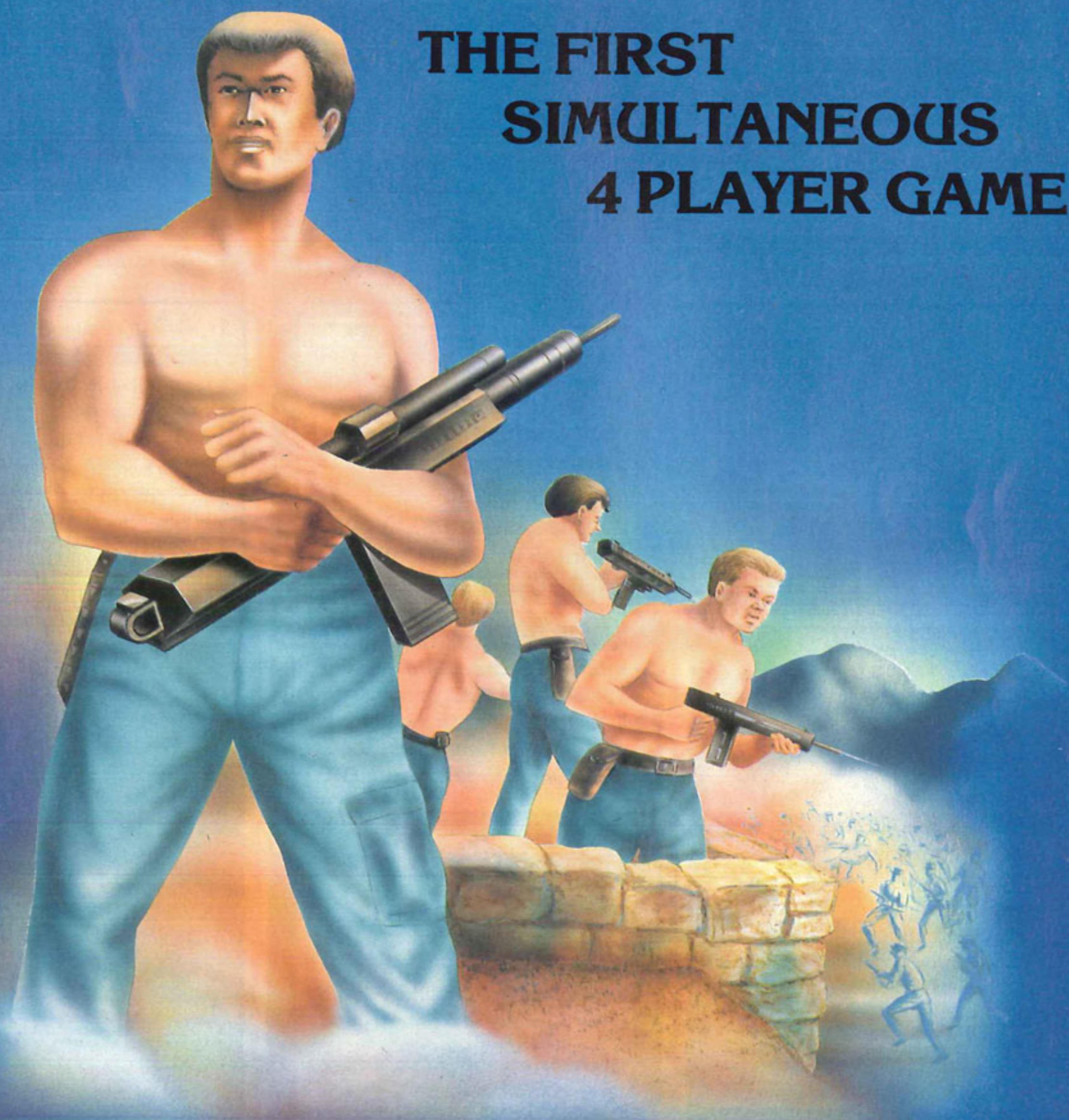
PALACE

Available from all good computer stores, or by post from Palace Software, The Old Forge, 7 Caledonian Road, London N1 9DX. ST versions (Rimrunner, Barbarian) £14.99 plus 80p P&P. Amiga (Barbarian) £19.99 plus 80p P&P. Access and Barclaycard holders phone 01-278 0751.

ATARI ST - COMMODORE AMIGA

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GRAPHICS BY PETE LYON

microdeal



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FEATURE ARTICLES



**** COVER FEATURE ****

Motorsport Madness -

Nick Clarkson Mega-tests nine car-racing games including favourites, such as, Super Sprint, Test Drive and Super Cycle.

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The List - The second and final part of our look at the hundreds of games already available for your Atari ST.

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Giving the Game Away - The STA offices have been inundated with hints, tips, pokes, and other essential gaming info. Also included this month are five more mega-pokes from Mark Lawrence: Gunship, TNT, Eagles Nest and Prohibition.

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Interview: U.S. Gold - Jason Spiller travels to Birmingham to find out how one of the biggest games houses was established.

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*** NEW ARCADE FEATURE ***

Despite growing criticism, arcade licences are still popular with software houses. We discover which of the latest batch of arcade releases make a good 'Case for Conversion'.

22

Action News - all the latest gossip, hot screen shots and game releases including: Mandarin Software Launch, 'Virus' released (ST version of Zarch), Live and Let Die, Rainbird's Corruption, Ultima 5, Vixen, The Empire Strikes Back, Pandora, Novagen's 'Skelter', Ocean's 'Where time stood still', Atari announce £400 ST games bundle.

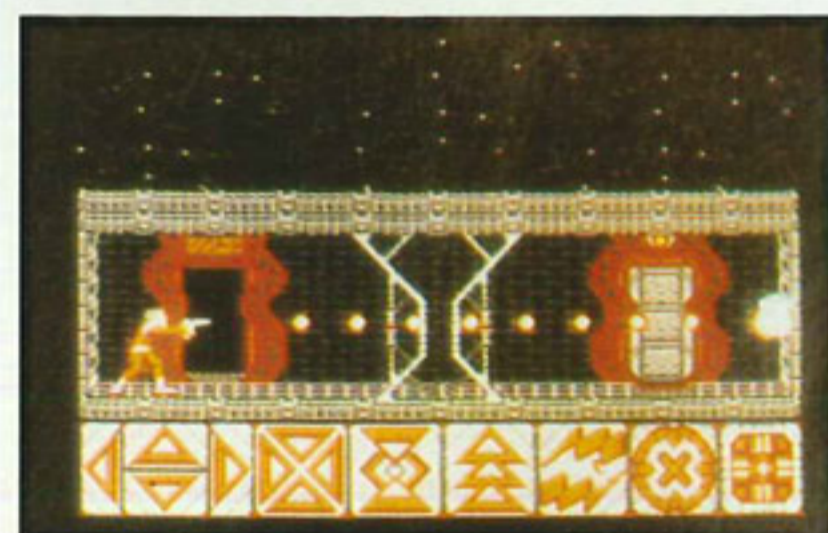
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REVIEWS

Like all Psygnosis software, *Obliterator* is immediately recognizable by the inimitable artwork on both the packaging and the screen. Their aim has always been to present large and life-like characters but, until now, it has been at the expense of game-play.

46



Crash Garrett flies East. Or should it be Crash Garrett flies undone? Crash has flown straight out of a kid's comic and is set to save us all with one mighty leap.

48

The rinky-dink *Panther* is back, and starring in his very own computer game must really make him feel in the pink. Will the game be a roaring success or will the Panther have cause to blush?"

50

Can *Vampire's Empire* prove it has those Magic Bytes?

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Battleships - Elite are really going back to basics here, with a game which I can remember playing secretly during lessons at school.

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Spitfire 40 must have clocked up a few thousand flying hours since its maiden flight into the blue pixel skies of certain 8-bit computers.

55

Return to Genesis - Scrolling shoot-'em-ups are travelling in a new direction since the discovery of smooth, horizontal-scrolling on the ST.

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BMX Simulator - You would have thought that the more commercial software companies would have exploited the popularity of BMX to the full.

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Bouncing out of the arcades, **Buggy Boy** is yet another coin-op conversion from Elite.

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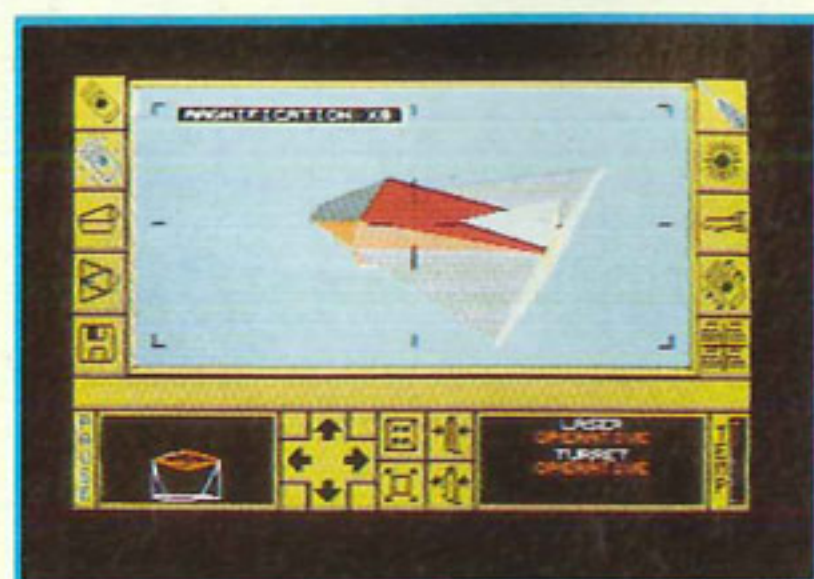


Pool - There have been a number of attempts to simulate both snooker and pool but, for obvious reasons, none have proved a satisfactory substitute for the real thing.

62

Those of you who were tempted by luscious screen shots of **Carrier Command** in fabulous 3D solid graphics be warned - the images may be picturesque, but the strategy involved is awesome.

64



Situated on the top of a desolate hill lies the **Dark Castle**, home of the infamous Black Knight! Can you, a lowly peasant, survive fourteen gruelling levels and topple this tyrannical ruler? Are you a hero? Or are you history?

63



Ikari Warriors - If you are an eight-bit war veteran who saw action in the Commando campaign two years ago, you could be forgiven for mistaking Elite's Ikari Warriors for Rambo, (the game).

68

Time and Magik - This trilogy contains three of the Level 9 Company's biggest adventure hits of recent years, revamped with graphics and more text. The games are 'The Lords of Time', 'Red Moon' and 'The Price of Magik'.

70

The appearance of the English version of **Captain Blood** has been eagerly awaited by the journalistic world since preview copies of the French version were seen. Infogrames have released a game that seems unwilling to be classified into any particular genre of games and sets a style all of its own.

72

Spidertronic is a clever, graphically appealing platform and lifts game with many novel additions.

74

International Soccer, by Micro-deal, is the first football game to be released for the ST.

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A real brain stretcher from Leisure Genius, **Scrabble Deluxe** gets the no holds barred STA review treatment.

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WHAT, MORE?

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CREDITS

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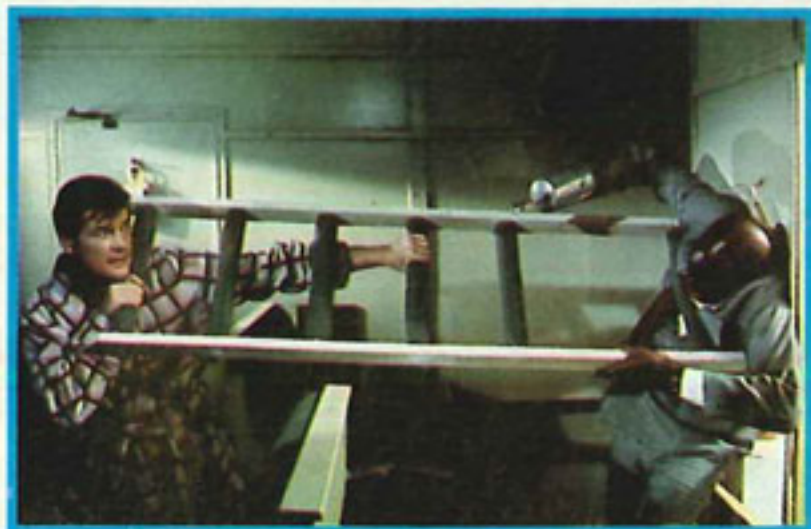
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ACTION NEWS

Live and Let Die

Domark are currently putting the finishing touches to a game based around the infamous speedboat chase in the Bond movie, Live and Let Die. Programmed



by Lynsoft, the game is said to feature virtually all of the action sequences of the film, such as, skidding across the lawn through the tea party, jumps, collisions, scarecrows armed with poison darts and other voodoo adversaries. Expect to see the game available around the end of June.

CRL capers

Four games are under development for the immediate future with CRL: Black Shadow, Robin Wood, Jet Boys and Brain Box. Black Shadow is a vertically-scrolling shoot-'em-up with interactive background and, according to my source, 'jolly good graphics'.

Robin Wood is a fantasy maze game with your mission being to rescue Maid Marion from the evil clutches of the Sheriff of Nottingham. Jet Boys is a completely re-worked version of the horizontally-scrolling shoot-'em-up Commodore classic. It promises to be exciting stuff and again will feature quality graphics and plenty of action.

Brain Box is a quiz game, probably similar to Blockbusters, but I was unfortunately unable to get any further information and this seems to be one of the games for later in the year. As for the other three, expect them to start turning up in the shops sometime in the early summer.

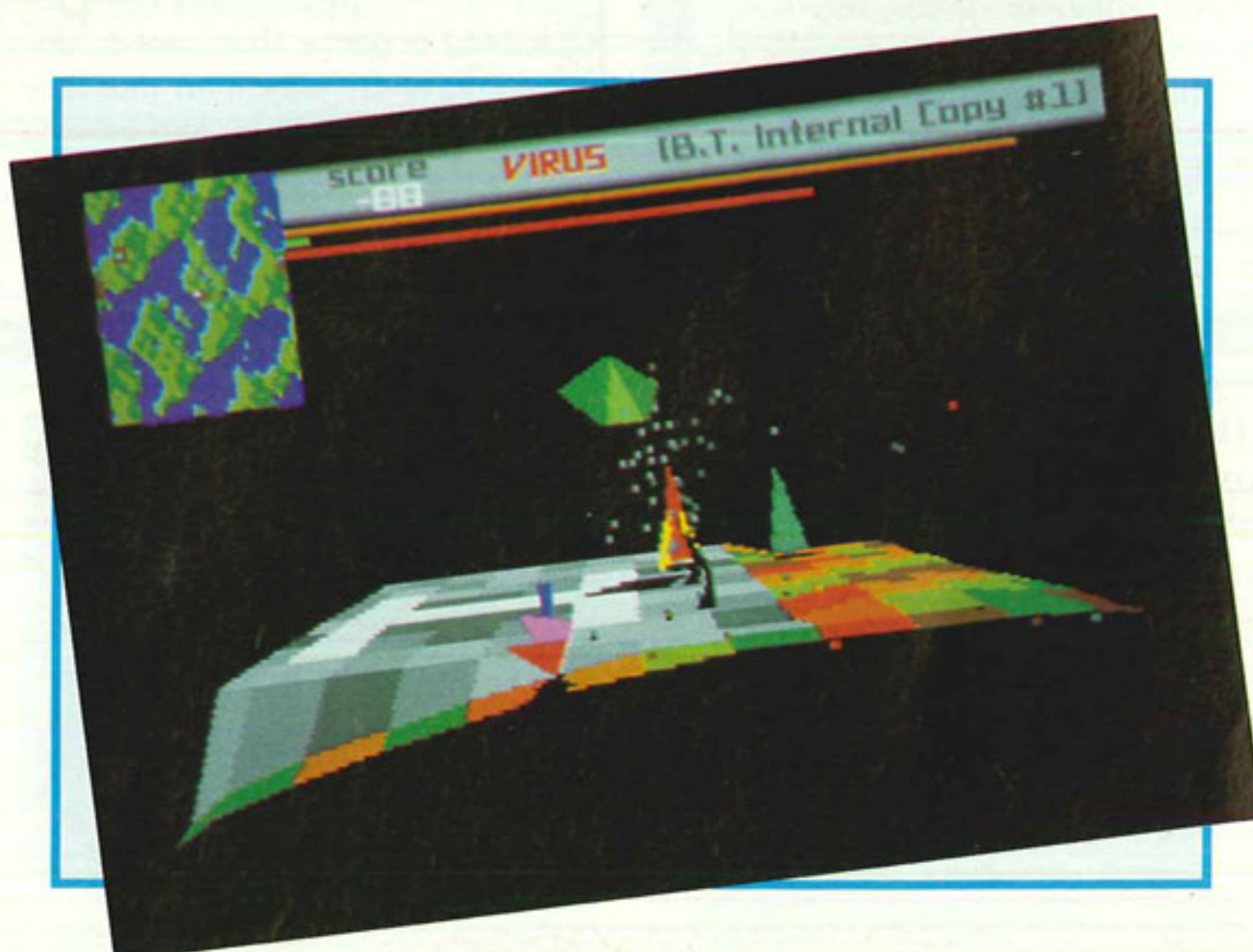
Corrupted program

Magnetic Scrolls are releasing Corruption for the ST in June, price £24.95. Set in the modern day, you are plunged into the world of high finance, double dealings and commercial intrigue. You are framed by your partner and find yourself



The Virus to look forward to

David Braben, co-author of the cult-hit Elite and the more recently Zarch on the Acorn Archimedes, has created an ST version on the theme of the incredible Zarch. Virus as it will be known, features Braben's fast-moving filled-in 3D landscapes. The game is based upon the scenario of aliens polluting your planet with a deadly virus. Your job is to halt its spread by launching missiles and dropping bombs as you skim across the undulating landscapes in a hoverplane, dealing with a variety of oncoming aliens. Virus is due to appear in June at a price of £19.95. Can't wait to catch this one!



faced with the prospect of doing time in jail. You are also being sought by an irate



drugs baron who has a pair of concrete shoes just your size. Graphics, as can be seen from the photos, are extremely good.

Ultimate Ultima?

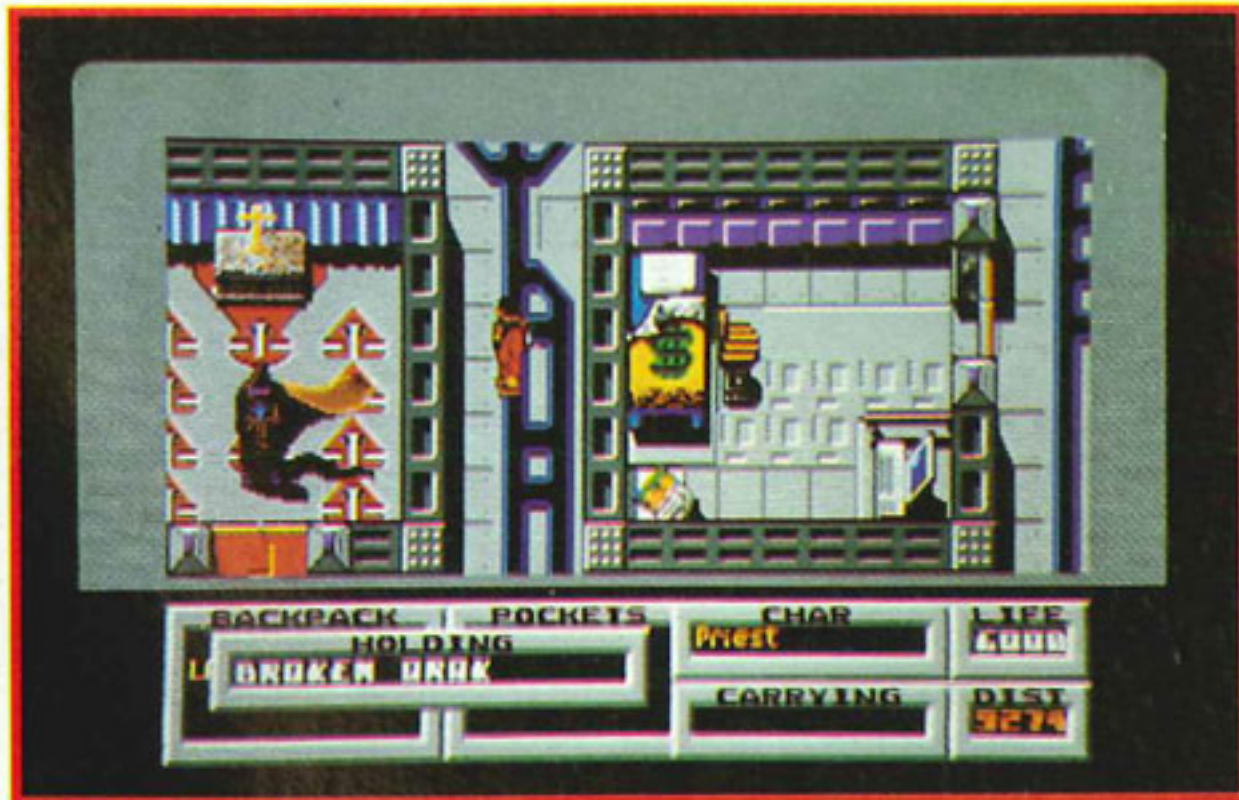
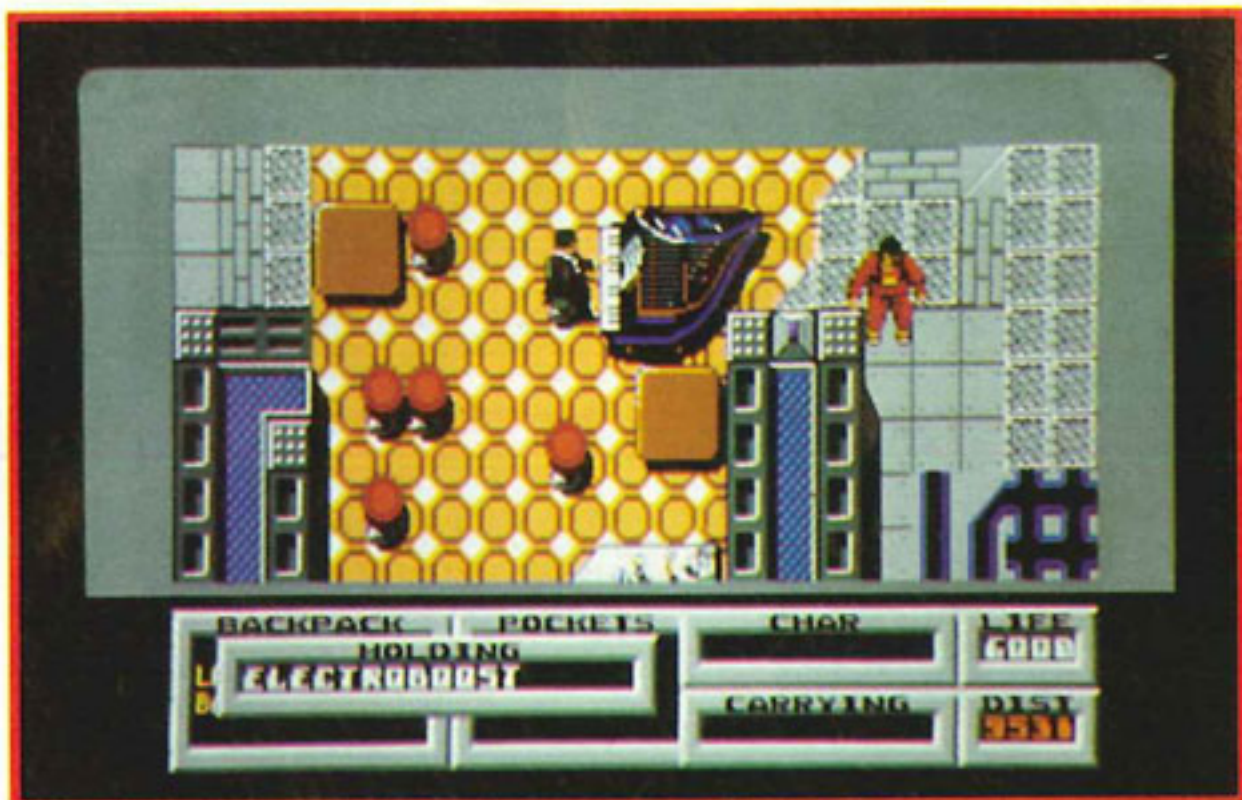
MicroProse will be releasing Ultima V in June and it promises to be the best yet, with improved parser and better graphics. Knowing MicroProse, there will be a spectacular press launch on completion of the game, so I'll no doubt have to go along and report on it. Sometimes life is tough, eh?

Another game under development is Red Storm Rising, a game based around Tom Clancy's bestseller of the same name. Tom Clancy is working in conjunction with the development team in America in order to keep the game as close to the book as possible. The game centres around one part of the narrative and puts you in control of a nuclear submarine.

Verminator delayed - Pandora out soon

Chris Hinsley, who brought us OCP Art Studio and who is now working on Rainbird's Verminator (as reported in last month's news), has unfortunately been out of action with a serious illness. This has meant that the game has gone from being a few weeks ahead of schedule to quite a way behind schedule. All of us at ST Action wish him a speedy recovery and look forward to seeing the finished game.

Pandora will be available by the time you read this and so should Legend of the Sword, due out at the end of April. As with all computer games, however, things can always happen that delay the release by a few weeks (or months!) so time will tell.



Domark strikes back

Domark are releasing a sequel to their very popular Star Wars game entitled - yes, you've guessed - The Empire Strikes Back. The game is under development with Vector Graphics, the people responsible for Star Wars, and



will again feature wire-frame graphics and plenty of action. The date for this game was given as around July/August.

COSMIC games

Cosmi, a software company based in California and run by William Demucci, are joining forces with MicroProse to bring you an (and I quote) 'interactive audio visual adventure' under the rather unambiguous title of 'The President is missing'.

They are also working on a Strategic Defense Initiative (that's Star Wars to you or me) simulation with the very upmarket name of 'Defcom 5'. I'll relay more news of both these products as soon as I can.

Alligata lying low

Alligata software have retreated to their favourite swamp and are currently not planning to release anything for the ST

until the end of the year. I suppose they're channelling all their efforts into a 16-bit version of that well-known card strategy game, Snap. (Ouch! One more like that and even the milkman will disown you. Ed.)

Ace II grounded

Ace II, from Cascade, has been grounded for the foreseeable future as they are 'concentrating on new products and, as such, Ace II is not a priority'. You can interpret that statement how you like, but it does seem a pity after all the pre-launch publicity and advertising that they have put into promoting the flight combat simulator to turn around and effectively say it's been shelved...

However, one good piece of news is that Ringwars is nearing completion - further details later.

Martech man in a fury

Martech are releasing Armageddon Man and our review copy should, as I write this, be winging its way to us in the post - unfortunately too late for a review this issue. It will be retailing for £19.95. Fury is a game that is currently under development by a group of programmers close to us on the south coast in Portsmouth. I'm afraid I am unable to give you any more information as everyone I contacted seemed to be a bit vague.

At the end of the week I will be attending the launch of Vixen - you know, the game with the lovely picture of Corinne Russell, the blonde in the leopardskin dress on all the press releases. I'll let you know how I get on next month...



Time Bandit on the cheap

Microdeal have just reduced the price of Time Bandit for the ST from £29.99 to £19.95. Time Bandit is an animated space adventure and allows two players to play at the same time. Entrapped by Evil Guardians, you must fight your way out and collect whatever treasure you can on your way back to the Timegates.

Starfleet 1

Electronic Arts are releasing Starfleet 1 in May. A heavy strategy game with some role-playing involved, it was developed by Interstel in the US. Two games that could see the light of day in July/August are, as yet, totally secret and I have not been able to get any more information other than one of the games is by Jez San and the other is by a totally new programmer whose background is in robotics.

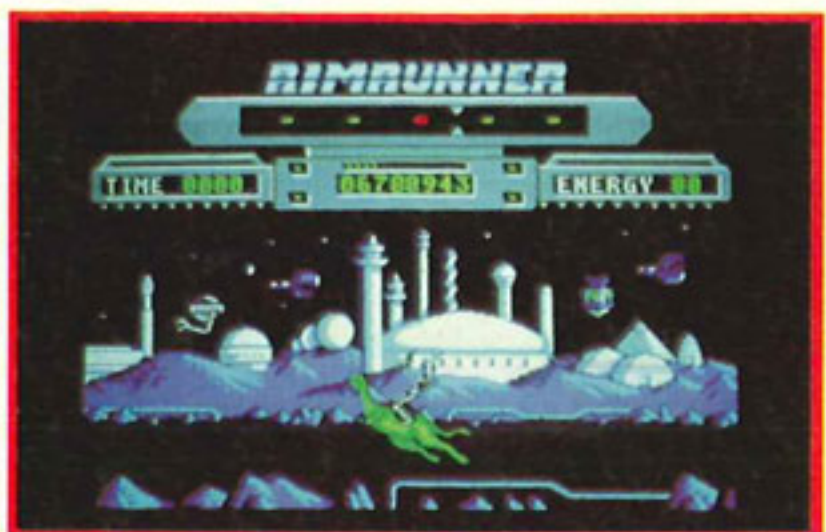
Mirrorsoft update

Sundog will be Mirrorsoft's next release on 11 May. According to Kathy, the voice from Mirrorsoft at the other end of the phone, the game is a space exploration/adventure and is 'the first game to take the ST seriously!' I must say I've heard some funny publicity blurb, but this really takes the biscuit.

Bermuda Project is near completion and is said to be 'very interesting!' Described as a sort of survival test, you play the part of an investigative journalist and you go to Bermuda to investigate the disappearance of a fast jet. Release date for BP is mid June.

Rimrunner up and running

Rimrunner, from Palace Software, is almost complete. Steve Brown and his team are putting the finishing touches to the game in which you control an Insectoid warrior on Perimeter Patrol defending the colony from invasion by the deadly Arachnoids. Richard Joseph is providing the music and sound effects so we could be in for an audio-visual feast. Retail price of Rimrunner will be £14.95



Atari announce free software with every 520 STFM sold this summer

Until 1 September, Atari will be giving away 22 top quality games with every 520 STFM purchased. The Atari 520 STFM costs £399.99 (incl. VAT) and the total value of the games is £414! The special promotional offer, called the 'Atari 520 STFM Summer Pack' is being offered to all stockists including WH Smith, Dixons and independent computer retailers nationwide.

The offer is launched at the Atari User Show (22-24 April) and the games included in the package are: Winter Olympiad '88, Mousetrap, Slapfight, Defender of the Crown, International Karate, Trailblazer, Enduro Racer, Arkanoid, Warlock, Marble Madness, Rampage, Eagle's Nest, Plutos, Leviathan, Supersprint, Ranar-ama, Strike Force Harrier, Tetris, Q-Ball, Roadwars, 3D Galax and Chopper X.

*** STOP PRESS THE 520STFM NOW FEATURES A DOUBLE SIDED DRIVE AT NO EXTRA COST!! ***



Mandarin extravaganza

Mandarin have announced joint venture agreements with Jawx International of Paris, and Red Rat of Manchester. First product to be released from the Paris software house under the Mandarin label will be STOS, a new Basic language designed to revolutionise games creation on the ST. STOS will offer more than 130 different commands and special facilities to display and animate up to 16 sprites. It is scheduled for release in late July, price £29.95.

Red Rat's debut title with Mandarin will be Rally Run. Expected to be ready for the PC show in September, the game will retail at around £20 and will be based on the Lombard RAC rally. Also in development are Crumble's Crisis, a multiple scenario arcade game, and Red Ace, a spaceship odyssey.

Level 9 also have a release planned for the summer. With a working title of Lancelot, it is an adventure set in the Middle Ages.

Late News:

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ocean

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The Eagle has landed on his feet at Elite

Elite are working on a licensing deal with Eddie 'The Eagle' Edwards in order to promote a new ski simulation that they are developing. One thing that worries me though: will the aim of the game be to come last in order to win the most money and gain television chat show appearances?

Space Racer is another from Elite and is a sort of motorbike race where you can not only go left and right, but also up and down. As the title suggests, it is a race through space, with obstacles and other riders trying to knock you off. Due out middle of May.



Above: Eddie tries his luck at downhill slalom
Below: Eddie turns into a giant snowball after crashing
Right: Bob Winner gets ready to duff his opponent in Paris



The final one from Elite this month is Bob Winner. No, it's got nothing to do with the Winter Olympics as I incorrectly supposed. It is, in fact, the name of an android sent back to 1934 to combat the hoodlums and gangsters of the prohibition years. Various combat skills are required and, all in all, it sounds like one to watch. The release date for Bob Winner is 3rd May.



Niki Penny, Marketing manager of L'Oréal UK

Skelter

I rang Bruce Jordan of Novagen and asked him how his space blast-'em-up game (the one that he described as 'a sort of 3-dimensional Asteroids, but different!') was coming along.

'Er, interestingly!' replied Bruce, somewhat evasively.

'That's a new word for "slow", Bruce', I said, laughing.

'Ha! Ha! Very funny. The title that we have almost settled on is 'Skelter' but Paul (Woakes) is having a spot of bother with the gameplay. The graphics look superb, but it is being able to keep track of the aliens when you are in a 3-D environment that is causing problems. Still, we hope to sort that one out fairly soon.'

'How about Damocles?' I asked (pronouncing it 'Damoculls' to see whether he would rise to the bait).

'Damocleese, please,' said Bruce, 'only Speccy owners call it Damoculls, but don't quote me on that!'

Oh, dear! Silly me. It just seemed

to slip out! Oh, well. I'm sure he won't mind really. I won't tell anyone if you don't. Anyway, as for Damocles, it is 'slowly getting there' and looks as though it will be launched at the PCW show (it is now the PC show, of course, but that title sounds too much like an Irish Business Machine).

Battle through the uncertainty

I phoned Anco to see whether any products were due for release on the ST but couldn't really get a definitive answer at all. Battle Through Time is being released for the Amiga in June and my contact said that she would expect for it to be released on the ST as well, but at the moment, my guess was as good as hers.

Activision trio

Three games are soon to be released from Activision. Cornov will be out sometime in May. Infocom are releasing

yet another classic adventure, Sherlock. Promises to be a smash. Finally, Abstract are releasing Mindfighter on 29 April. Programmed by Fergus O'Neill, it is an adventure based on the book of the same name by Anna Popkess. This will feature digitised graphics, icons and an even more superior parser.

Captain Blood joins Bomber Command

David Croweller of Infogrames has informed us that the flying sequence from Captain Blood where you steer your way through mountainous terrain, is being redeveloped into a flight simulator of sorts. No details at the moment, but



expect the fantastic vector graphics to be incorporated into some sort of bombing run down a valley, with gun emplacements and industrial targets to knock out. David's estimate for the release date was roughly four months.

Pacland visas available end of April

Following close on the heels of Flintstones is another game from Grand Slam; Pacland, the smash arcade game that has, as far as we know, been well translated to the ST. Expect to see it released around the end of April. Another bit of news is that Peter Beardsley's Football will be available in around a month's time. No details at present.

Phantastic

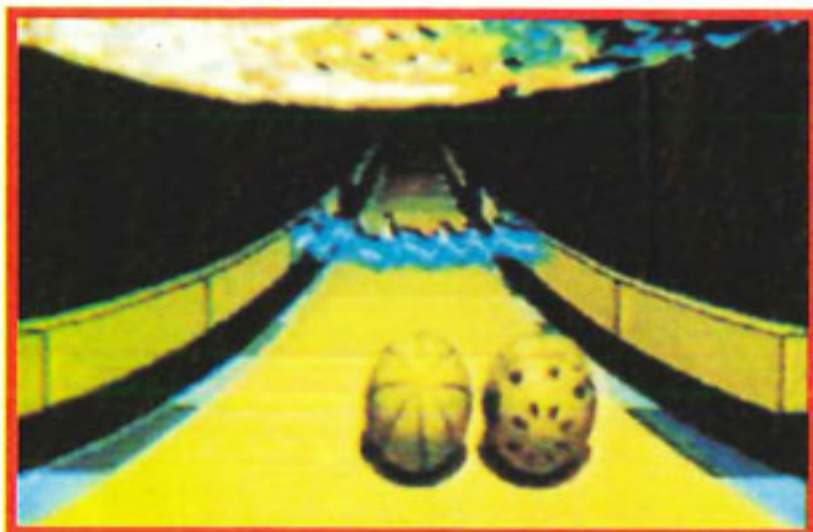
Exocet Software are releasing Phantasm for the ST around the middle of May. Retailing for £19.95, the game will be of a format similar to that of Tau Ceti and Academy.

Bolo

Mike Dale of Signa Publishing is flooding the market with a PD version of Bolo, a German Breakout clone that runs on mono systems only and has various neat tricks, such as gravity and magnetic bricks. The response towards the PD game will decide whether or not he markets the full game. In the ST Action office the game is raved about, so let's hope that it's released soon.

Mastertronic update

Roadwars for the ST, the arcade game that instantly turned the Amiga into a 'quality graphics games machine' is 'in the post' to us here at ST Action. The game allows one or two players in a head-to-head mode and is said to feature graphics as good as those on the other machine. It will retail at £19.99



Sidewinder is due out in early May and so, for that matter, is Motorbike Madness. Retailing at £9.99, Madness is basically a motorbike race game. Vectorball could be described as ice hockey with the puck controlled by an Asteroid-type ship belonging to each player. It will

Where time stood still

Ocean's next release will be the above titled game. Due for release in mid May, it is based around four characters who crash their aircraft into a dense jungle where dinosaurs roam and cavemen dash around in goat skins. Jarrett, the pilot, is naturally the more able person to get you out of this mess, but you can control any of the other three: Clive, the fat, wealthy businessman; Gloria, his daughter, who is not a character to bring cheer into the hearts of liberated women as she is a bit of a sappy date; and Dirk, her fiance.

The aim is to get out of the valley and back to civilisation. Being attacked by dinosaurs, chased by cavemen, becoming hungry and thirsty and even having to cope with one or two of your party disappearing into the undergrowth are all part and parcel of the game. It sounds very interesting, but I'll wait and see whether it lives up to its spec.

Platoon and Arkanoid II, Revenge of Doh are also due for release middle of May. Platoon is based on the film of the same name and, although selling well on other formats, is supposed to be even better on the ST. As for Revenge of Doh, it is the sequel to that arcade classic, Arkanoid, and will no doubt prove to be extremely popular.



be available sometime in May at £9.99

Mid August will see the release of Dreadnought for the ST. Also in the pipeline are a couple of games for which they are currently trying to get the li-

censing agreements. One of these will be Lord of the Rings, but as for the others, I was unable to obtain any further information.

In the next thrilling issue of ST Action

- **Megatested: Seven Flight Simulators**
- **Feature: The Quest Series from Sierra**
- **Games Reviewed:**
Impossible Mission II, Waste, Flintstones, Rolling Thunder, ST Wars, Leatherneck, Nightmare, Goldrunner II, Football Manager II, Captain America, Shadowgate and many more
- **Issue three on sale 14th June**

Foundations Waste

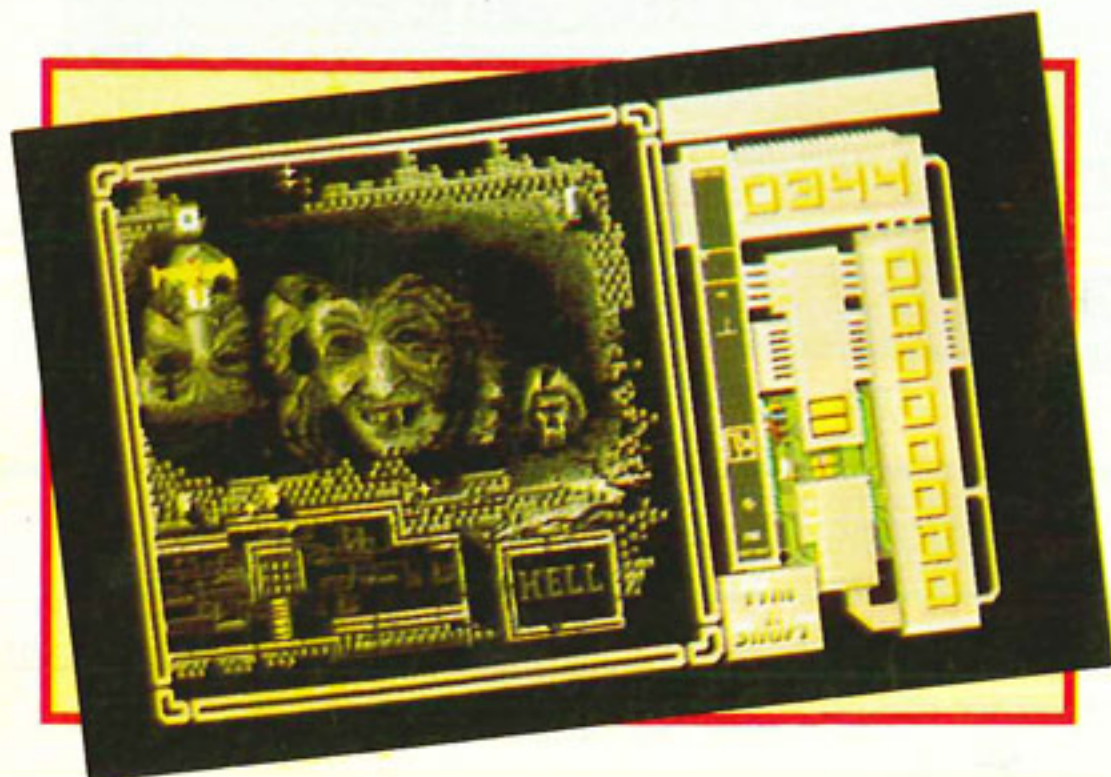
Foundations Waste, from Exocet Software, is yet another vertically-scrolling shoot-'em-up and features good quality graphics and very large sprites.



Vertically-scrolling sequel

Goldrunner II has arrived in the office too late for inclusion in this issue, but for those of you who are interested, here's a quick run-down. Goldrunner II is basically the same as the first version but now features even faster, smoother scrolling. The general theme of the game is the same but you are now able to vary this with the option of two scenery discs, available for £5.95 each. The game itself retails at £19.95.

Another game too late for inclusion is Leatherneck. A vertically-scrolling shoot-'em-up with a difference. This time, instead of a spaceship, you play a commando with more than a lorry-load of weapons secreted about your person. Machine guns and grenades all help 'blat' the enemy soldiers. One unique feature is the ability to have up to four players playing on screen simultaneously. This is possible thanks to a 4-player adaptor that fits into the printer port. The adaptor is available for £5.95 and the game retails at £19.95.



Fred and Barney are go!

Flintstones, from Grand Slam Entertainments has arrived just too late for a review this month. The graphics are very good and cartoon-like and the sampled 'Yabba-Dabba-Doo' is brilliant. However, from what I have played of the game so far, it seemed a bit slow and tedious. See it in the shops now and in issue 3 of ST Action. Price: £19.95.



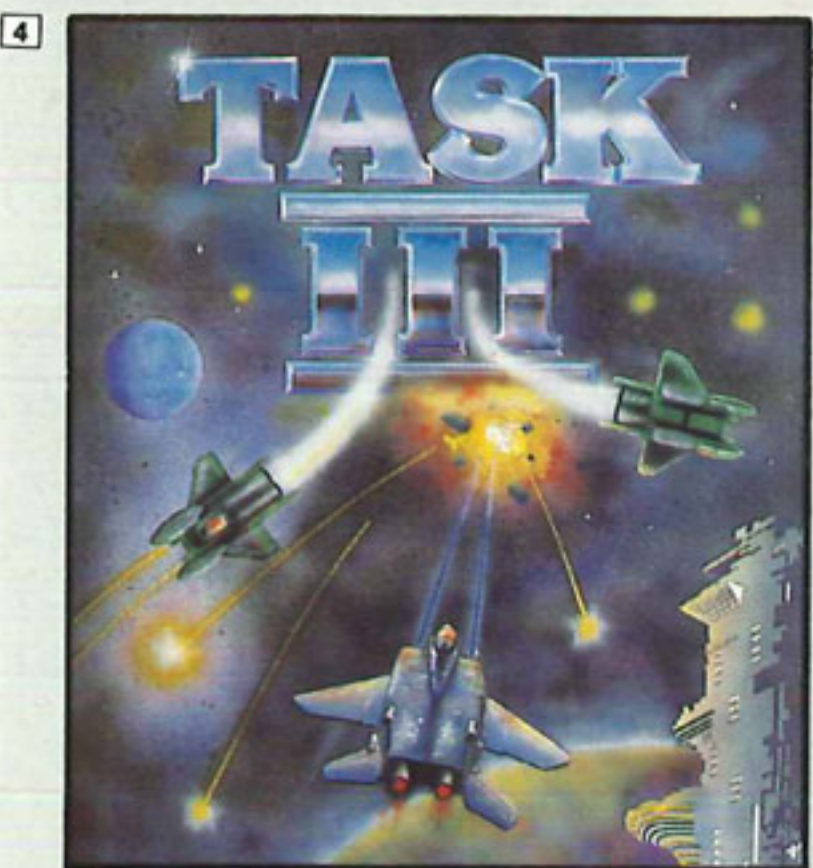
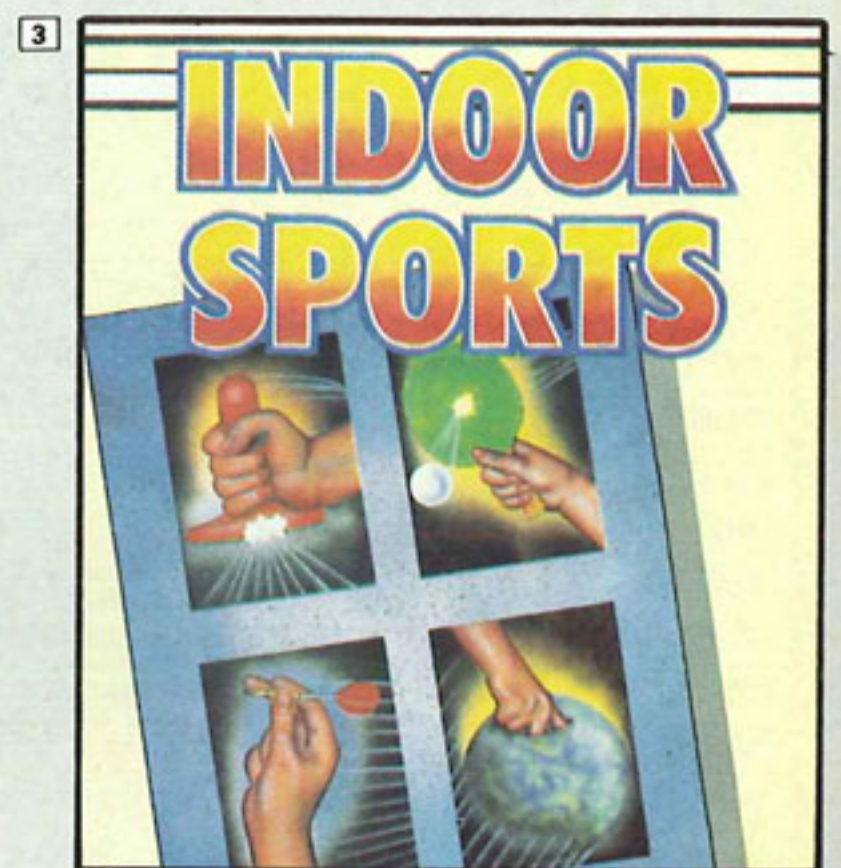
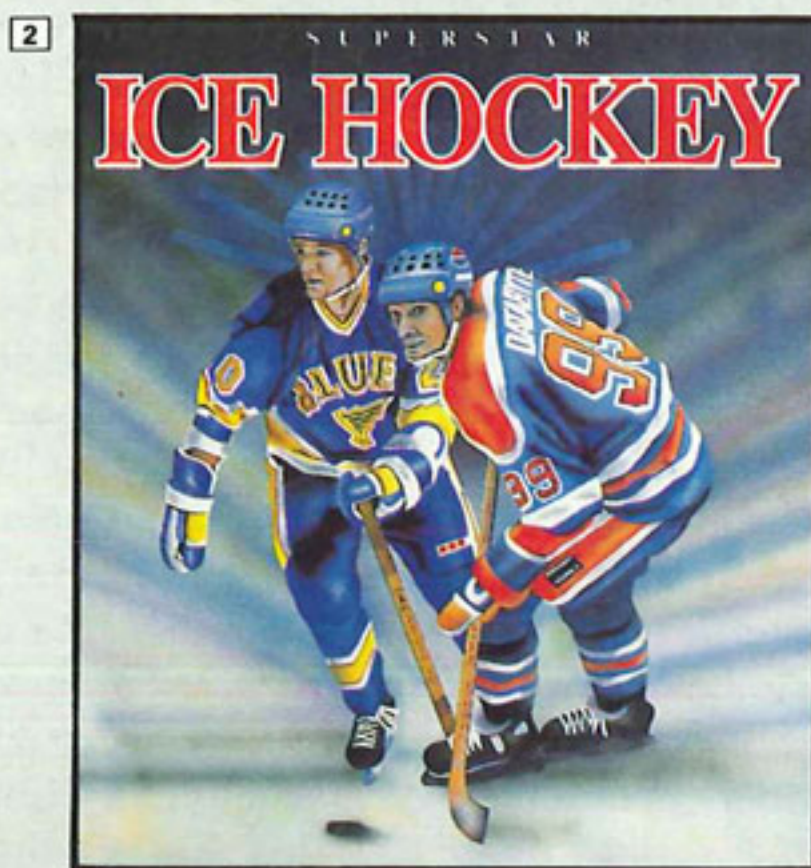
Impossible Mission II

This is very close to the version released on the 64 and promises to be a big hit. Very addictive, with lots of action, good music and a blood-curdling sampled scream if you fall into a bottomless pit.



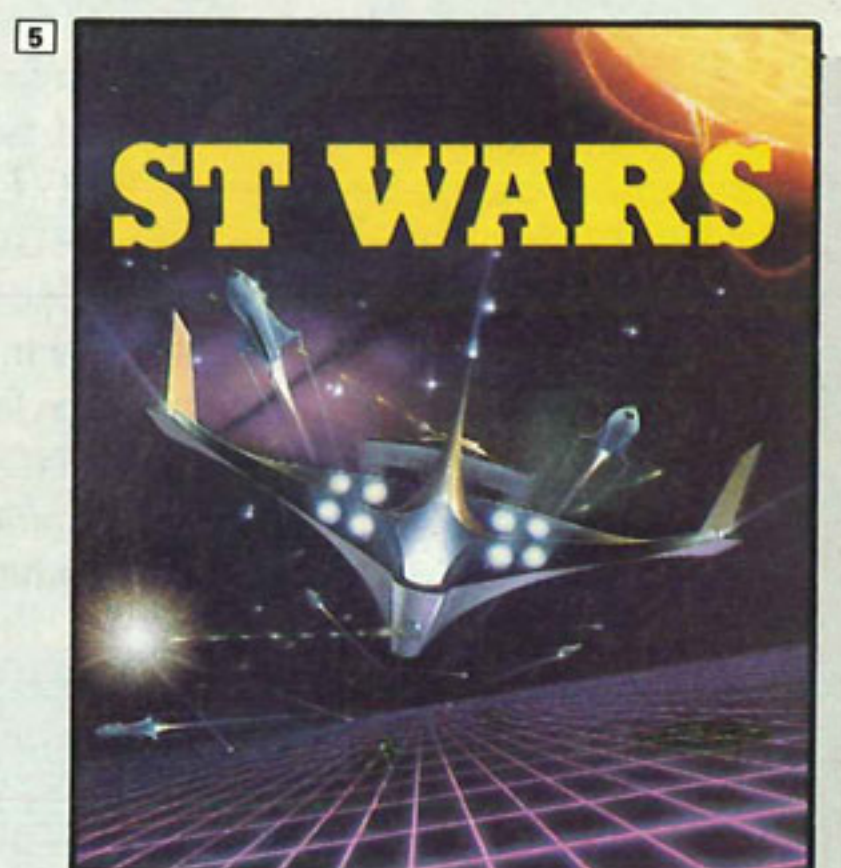
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Mandarin Software Lunch and Launch

Into the ring steps yet another software company bent on conquering the home computer game market. Mandarin Software, Britain's newest software publishers, selected the Lee Ho Fook restaurant in London's China Town to hold their official launch, (or should that be lunch?) Hosted by Mike Cowley, in full mandarin robes, the press were invited to sample a preview of the new range of games followed by a 14-course Chinese banquet. As an offshoot of Database Publications, Mandarin already have strong connections with the software industry and it seemed a logical step to take the 'RAM' by the horns and move even closer to the game buyer by also publishing software.



Mandarin will be promoting and publishing the work of some already well-known British software houses. The first big name in the new stable is that of the Level 9 Adventure company and it is their trilogy of games entitled 'TIME AND MAGIK' which leads the assault on the ST front. Level 9 were formerly published by the British Telecomm Software group on the Rainbird label, but inter-company disagreements forced a split and caused Level 9 to go it alone. A spokesman for Level 9 explained that they believed Rainbird's marketing policies caused unacceptable delays in the launch of new games and that the new venture with Mandarin would help Level 9 achieve their target of releasing five new adventures each year. The TIME AND MAGIK package is a re-release of the three classic adventures 'THE LORDS OF TIME', 'RED MOON' and 'THE PRICE OF MAGIK', each of which were extremely popular on 8 bit machines.

Future Level 9 adventures which will be available from Mandarin, include the Arthurian legend of 'LANCELOT', (available early summer) and 'GNOME RANGER II'. Future plans also include the dropping of the existing digitised graphics which were introduced with the Knight Orc adventure

and the adoption of hand drawn screens which will match the excellence of the Magnetic Scrolls games.

The Bubble Bus Software team are also releasing their arcade game STARQUAKE through Mandarin and demos of the game were on show displaying the colourful platform-type game.

One of the most exciting products on view was 'STOS' from the French software house 'JAWX'. STOS is a new BASIC language with a BIG difference. If you ever dreamt about creating your own arcade game, but could never quite manage to wrestle successfully with those nasty machine code bits, STOS is about to make your dreams a reality. STOS has all the standard BASIC commands available, but it also includes facilities to create and animate sprites, scroll the screen in any direction and import graphic screens from standard packages, such as Degas Elite. STOS was released in France last Christmas and it is doing great business as a game designer package with some of the largest software houses. The English version will be available in the late summer and it will sell for £29.95. Additional packages are planned to complement the initial release and these will include music composers and

graphic designers. Demonstrations of arcade games written with STOS were also being displayed and the results certainly looked very professional. If the final package lives up to its initial promise, this piece of software is sure to be a winner in the British Atari charts.

The final addition to the Mandarin stable is the Red Rat company from Manchester. Red Rat already produce budget ST software and they attended the launch to give a preview of their next ST offering entitled 'Lombard Rally'. This game is a simulation of the RAC Lombard Rally

Race in which you will drive a Ford Sierra through all stages of this world-famous endurance test. The view through the windscreen is similar to that of Outrun, complete with the winding, dipping road. The race wends its way through forests



Hordes of journalists eat and chat their way through the launch (or should that be lunch?)


and mountain backdrops complete with rain and night driving. To complete the course you will need to have your car serviced, repaired and modified, all of which requires money. Cash can only be obtained by granting interviews to television reporters who will naturally wish to question you on all aspects of rallying. If you fail to answer the newshound's questions correctly you will not be paid and thus your attempt is doomed to failure. This side of the game will resemble Trivial Pursuits with wheels on! The graphic demos are certainly impressive even at this early stage in the design, and so confident are Mandarin that the final effect will be a real driving experience that they plan to include a sick bag in the game packaging!





Mandarin Software staff (Mike Cowley central) somewhat over-dressed for the occasion



LIGHT SYNTHESISER

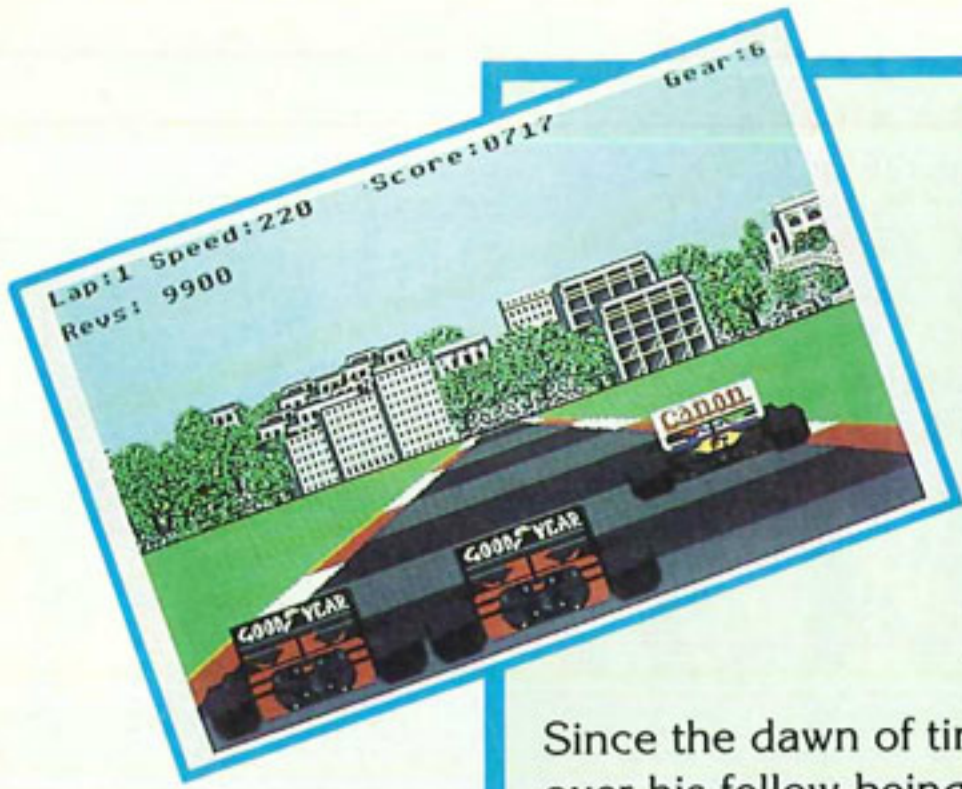


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MOTORSPORT MADNESS



Since the dawn of time, man has had the will to triumph over his fellow beings. Soon, after some bright spark had invented the wheel - and a number of other components - the automobile was created. With this new mode of transport came yet another challenge to man - motor racing. The roar of engines, the crunching of gears, and the squealing of brakes all helped to make this high-speed sport popular with the richer members of society. For us more humble beings, sitting at the trackside seemed to be the closest any of us would ever come to the real thing. But, with the age of computers and their software, comes the chance to try the sport of motor racing without collect-

ing the garage bills. So, whether you are a budding Barry Sheen or a nippy Nigel Mansell, take a quick look at our racing supertest.

We found that among the number of racing games available, there are three main categories. Firstly, the motorcycle games, in which the contestants traverse a number of different terrains in search of the chequered flag and the all-important winning-line. The three games we have selected in this category are: Enduro Racer from Activision, 500cc Grand Prix from Loriciels, and Super Cycle from Epyx. Our second category takes a form similar to that of the first, only this time the player takes to the wheel of a

high-performance racing car. The three games we selected are: Formula 1 Grand Prix from Micro Value, Crazy Cars from Titus, and Test Drive from Electronic Arts. The last game in this category takes an out-of-the-cockpit view, and could be argued to be a driving simulation. The final category we chose gives the player a bird's-eye view of a track on which he controls a car. The games we took a look at include: Super Sprint from Electric Dreams, Karting Grand Prix from Anco, and Turbo GT from Ere Informatique.

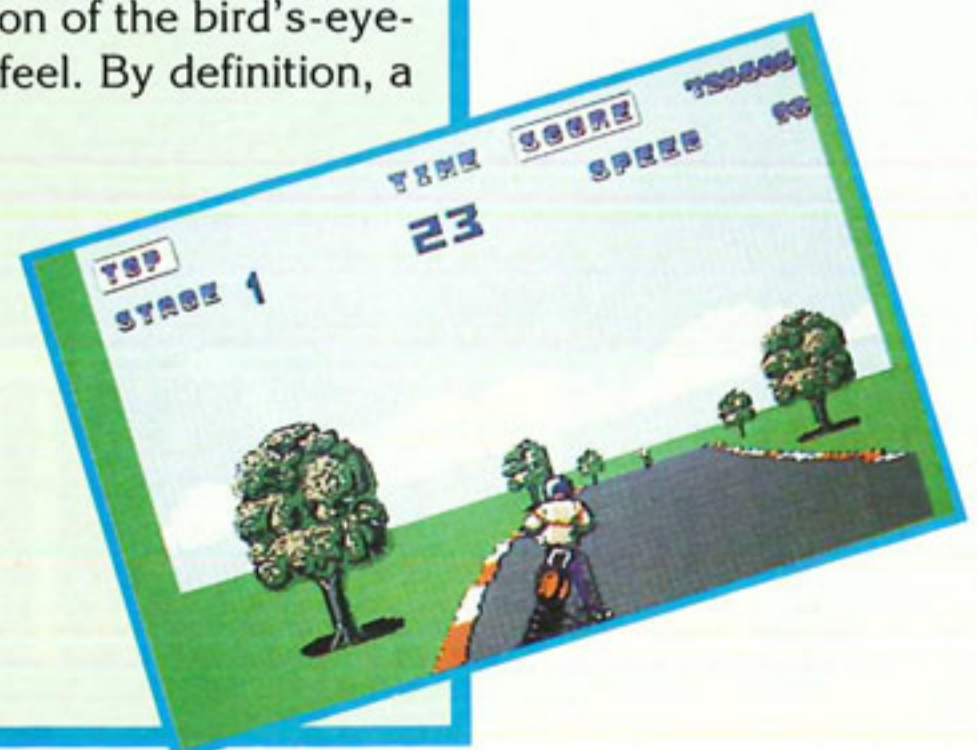
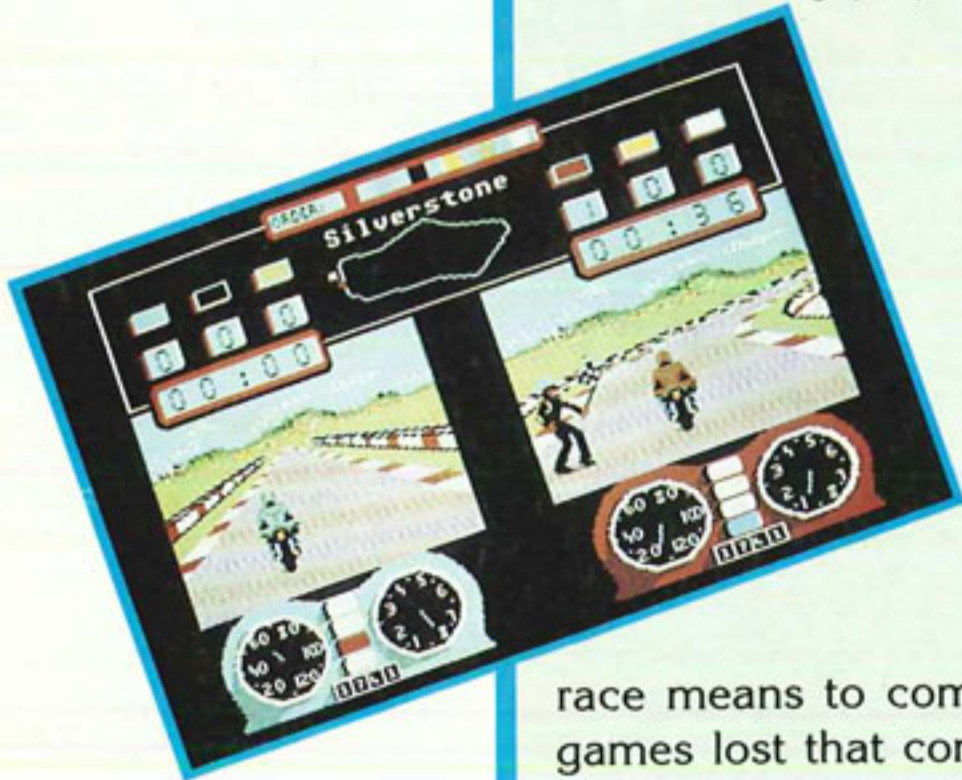
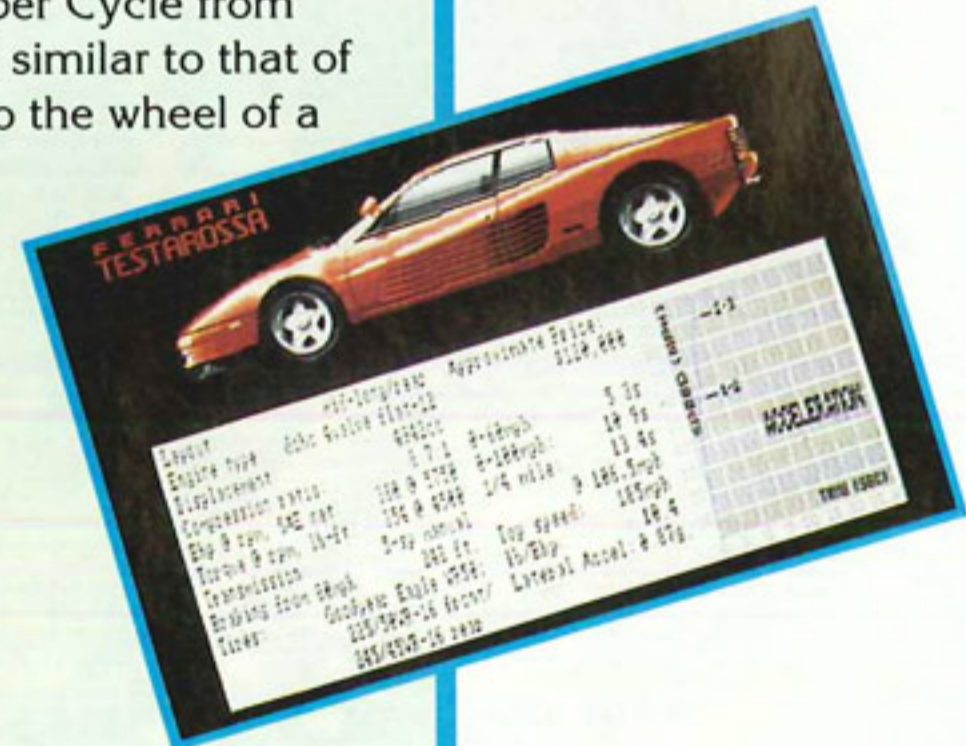
Having played all the games in this supertest I have

reached the conclusion that there is a significant lack of racing games for the ST that contain any real substance. Looking back to the days when I owned a Commodore 64, I seem to remember the exact opposite to be the case. Games such as Epyx's Pitstop II and Firebird's Revs were games that stood the test of time. Either of these games would have been given the highest marks in this test. I feel this fact just goes to show us how little thought has been put into the racing games on the ST. Surely, with all the machine's extra capabilities, someone should have produced a quality game by now.

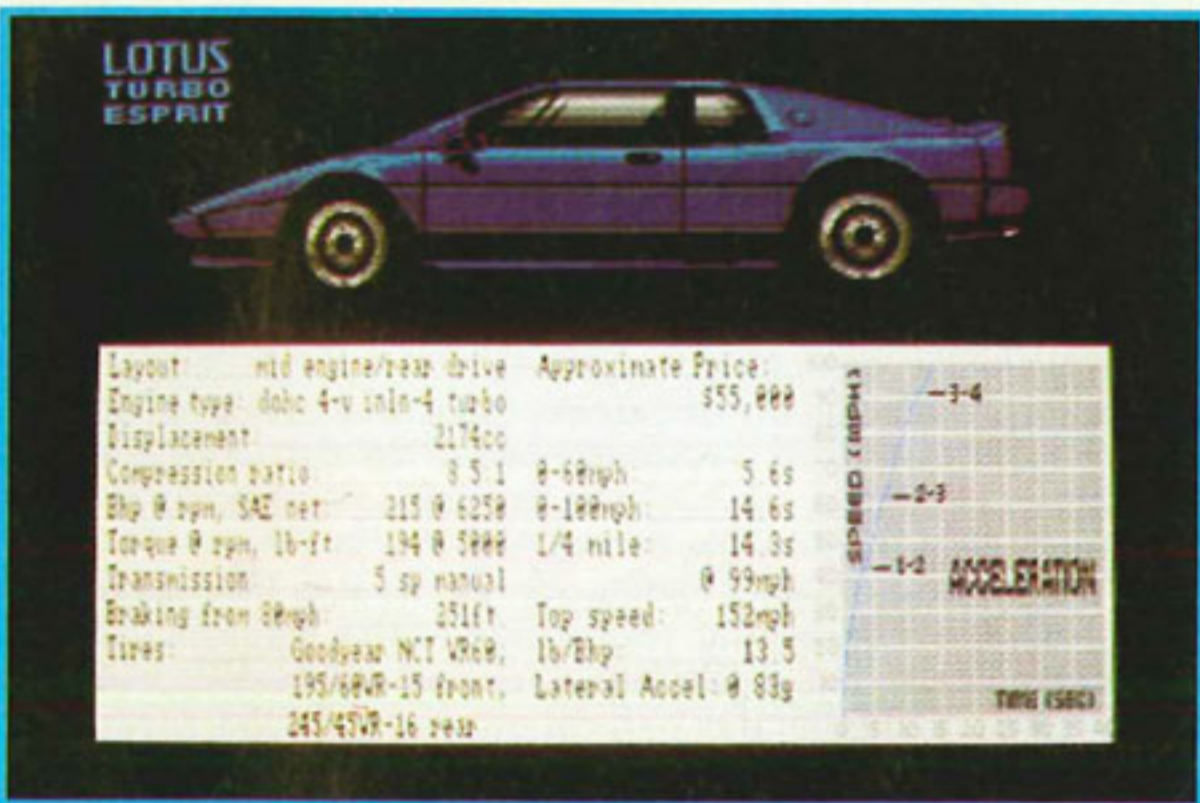
All of the games, with the exception of the bird's-eye-view class, seemed to lose the "racing" feel. By definition, a

race means to compete in speed. I, however, thought the games lost that competitive element and became purely a race against time, the presence of other drivers or riders simply becoming coincidental. The "overhead" games successfully managed to avoid this mistake; players could actually have the chance to race against fellow drivers or the computer-controlled cars.

Hopefully, in time, games will appear to quench the thirst of serious ST race enthusiasts but, for now, we will have to be content with today's offerings...



Test Drive by Accolade



Test Drive loads to the accompaniment of a neat signature tune, one of those that you can tap your fingers to on the steering wheel, if you have the time! The introductory graphics are a small taste of what is to come, and by the looks of them we're in for a rare treat. After watching the introduction, which includes some flash Harry in a Porsche winding down his window and flashing his Ultra-brite smile at us, we are free to choose which of these luxurious beasts we want to drive. All the cars are beautifully depicted with their specifications printed below. Movement of the joystick in a vertical manner will flick through the cars in sequence - press fire to decide which one you want. Having selected your car the window winds down, electrically I guess, and the driver glances out momentarily before roaring off. Now we wait while the roadway loads - the anticipation is killing!

The screen shows the view through the windscreen of whatever vehicle you choose. The dashboard display is a faithful representation of the real thing. A rear-view mirror in the top right corner will allow you to watch out for any approaching smokies, while a radar detector should warn you of any speed traps in the vicinity. The gear stick is also displayed whenever the fire button is depressed. So, rev up the engine and slam into gear. Controlling the speed of the car is relatively simple, and combined with the gear changing, the player soon gets the feel of the car's power. The steering, however, can be a little tricky. Sure enough, the basic left-right movement is easy. It's the finer steering that can prove difficult; just you try it while taking a high mountain bend at 120mph! To help, or hinder, Accolade have marked the top of the wheel with a little red dot.

The road winds through the mountains, and your task is to drive from one filling station to another. A score is amassed in relation to how quickly you can drive from one stop to the next. Upon completion of a level your car is refuelled, and after you have been given some witty comment and your score, you can then start the next leg of your journey. Each new stage introduces more problems; more traffic, a greater police presence, an uneven road, potholes, they're all here. Beware not to be caught by the police as no amount of smooth talking will help you out! The game will end when you are caught or when you suffer five mishaps on the same stage. Scores are registered and the option to play again is offered, either with the same car or another.

It seems like only yesterday that US Gold released their highly acclaimed Pitstop II. Now, attempting to follow their recipe for success, Loriciels have released 500cc Grand Prix on the ST. There are two main differences between this game and its earlier counterpart. Firstly, the game concerns the racing of motorcycles - these two-wheeled monsters prove to be just as tricky to control. Secondly, the player's windows are situated side-by-side instead of being positioned vertically on top of each other.

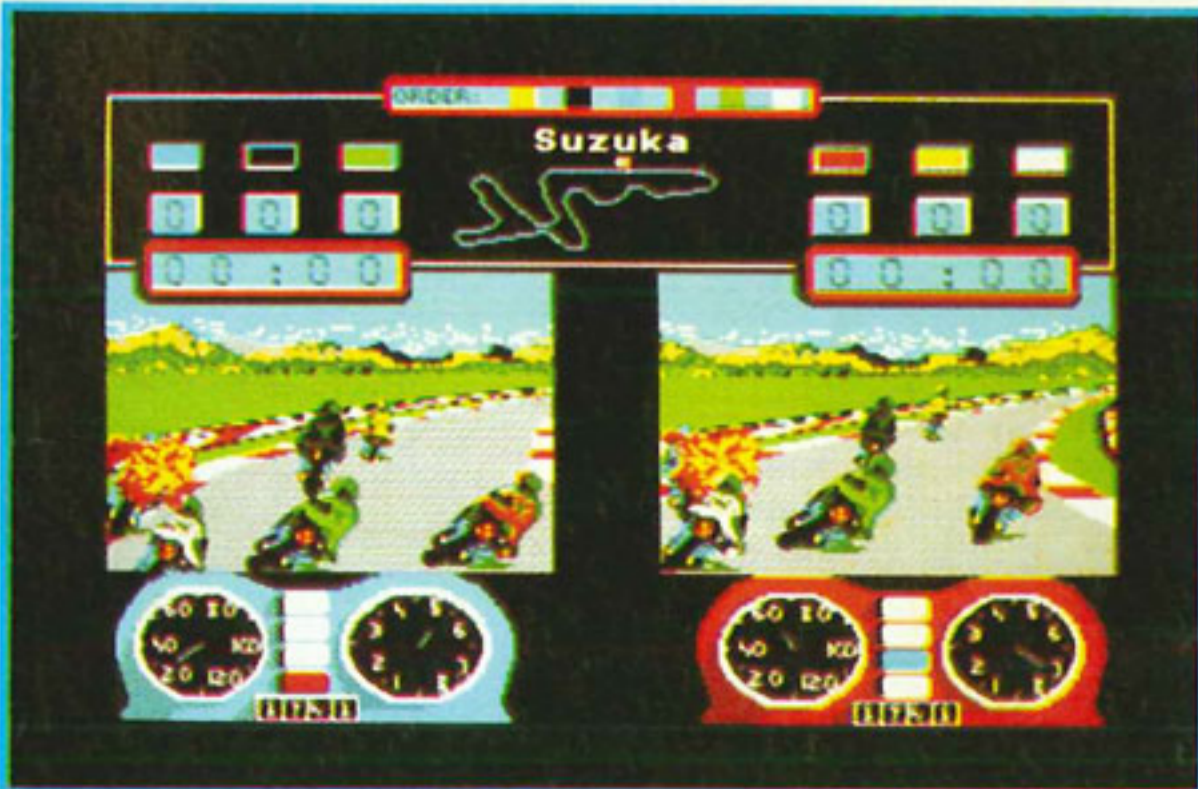
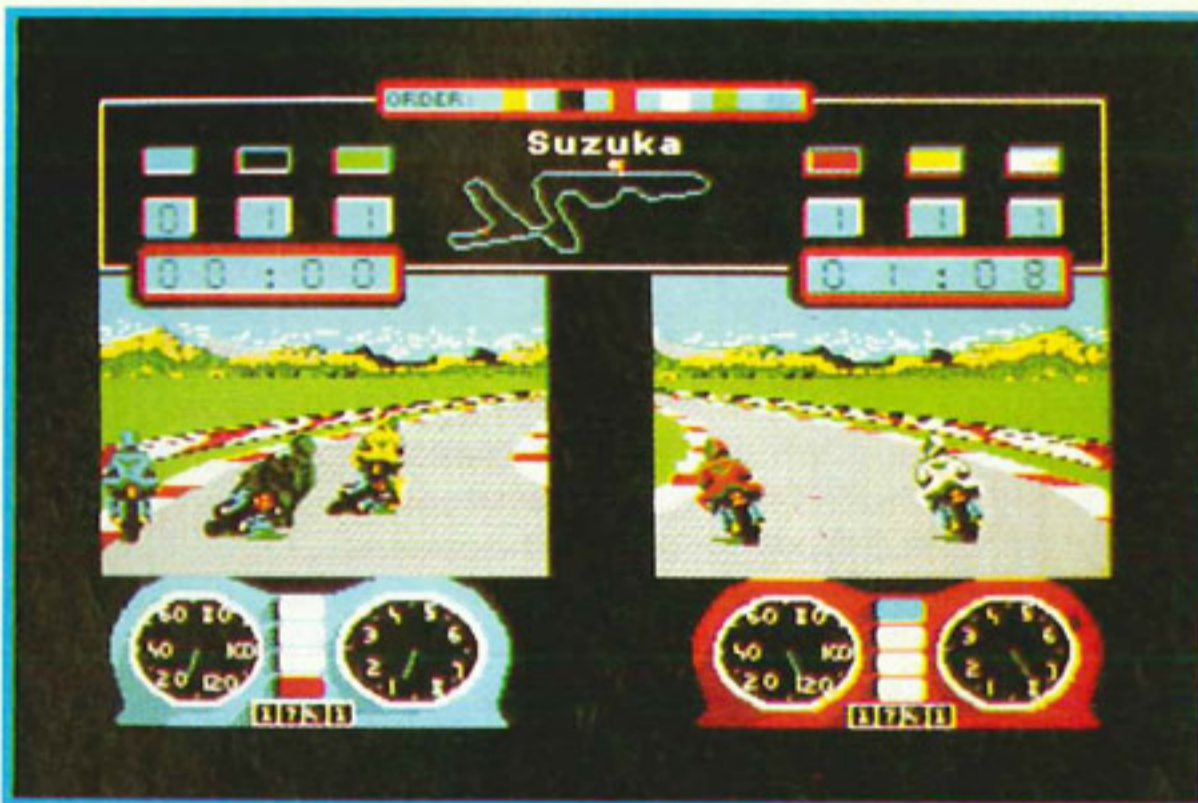
I was quite surprised to have to load the game manually; I thought double clicking on a .PRG file had been abolished along with National Service. Once loaded, the game is controlled solely with the joystick. The environment in which the player selects his, or her, options has been planned extremely well and is very user friendly - even my father managed to select the correct options first time! Having selected the difficulty level, number of players, and finally signed in, the contestants can choose on which track they wish to race. Twelve circuits are depicted and a player may decide to choose any one of these, or if he wishes he may choose to compete in the world championship, thus taking part in all the races. Here the programmers have decided to include one really useful feature: after each race has been completed a player may wish to retire by saving his game, thus allowing him to nurse his throttle-control hand and to return to the track later.

The game lets you see your rider, rather than give you an on-the-bike view. Control of the rider is very simple: joystick movements give the general acceleration, braking, and steering, while the fire button helps with more acute movements and the all-important gear changes. This final operation is of paramount importance - forget to change gears andkaboom!

All the relevant, and some not so relevant, information is at hand to the player. It seems the programmers have left nothing out - except playability. I found the bikes notoriously difficult to control and only after some time did I manage to keep up with the computer-controlled riders - and even then I never won a race.

Overall, 500cc Grand Prix is an unfortunate game. The programmers seem to have studied various other games and lifted their finer points, so giving a very comfortable environment. But it is a pity they neglected the playability factor, as this alone can make a game. I'm afraid I cannot recommend 500cc Grand Prix: it is worth a look but only if you have nothing better to do.

500cc Grand Prix





Super Cycle

Think back to the early days, old breakout machines, Space Invaders, and those archaic racing games where the emphasis was put on steering. The visual and audio technology may have come on leaps and bounds, but have you noticed the physical changes in the consoles? Cockpits are now common-place and games such as Hang-on actually include a full-size replica of a motorcycle. Super Cycle is best described as a Hang-on clone, and a good one too.

The game loads in two stages: the first lets the player choose the colour of his bike and the pattern and colour of his all-important leathers - a must for any biker. These selections are made simply by using the joystick and, when complete, the player must decide which level to tackle then wait for the action to start - I hate the anticipation.

The first thing I noticed when the game appeared was the sparseness. The screen seems uncluttered to the point of being basic. Unlike 500cc Grand Prix, Super Cycle's instrument panel is very bland. There are speed and rev counters to watch and a gear indicator, but somehow these become just perfunctory when the action starts. Again, Super Cycle is supposed to be a race against



fellow leather-clad maniacs but in practice it leans more towards a race against time. At the start of the game there only seem to be three riders in the race - and one of those is you! However, a number of other enthusiasts are encountered further around the track and it is a joy to see your 750cc monster machine pull past these ever-moving obstacles.

As the game progresses to further levels, the track seems to become more and more bend-ridden, and as if this were not enough, the programmers have included one or two little extras. Among the first impediments are pools of water or oil, which are best avoided because contact lowers your speed. Later, some bright spark decides to seal off one of the lanes, thus making you and your fellow competitors channel into a single lane. Bonus tracks are awarded on which the rider must race as normal but also collect flags which are positioned neatly on the track and it is recommended that a player grabs as many as possible because they really help to boost the score.

The game's sound effects are, as usual, a little scarce, apart from the monotonous engine drone. The graphics, too, may seem sparse but at least they are well drawn and clear - the scrolling background is particularly eye-catching. Overall, Super Cycle would be my first choice. It combines a highly exciting race game with easy playability.

Enduro Racer

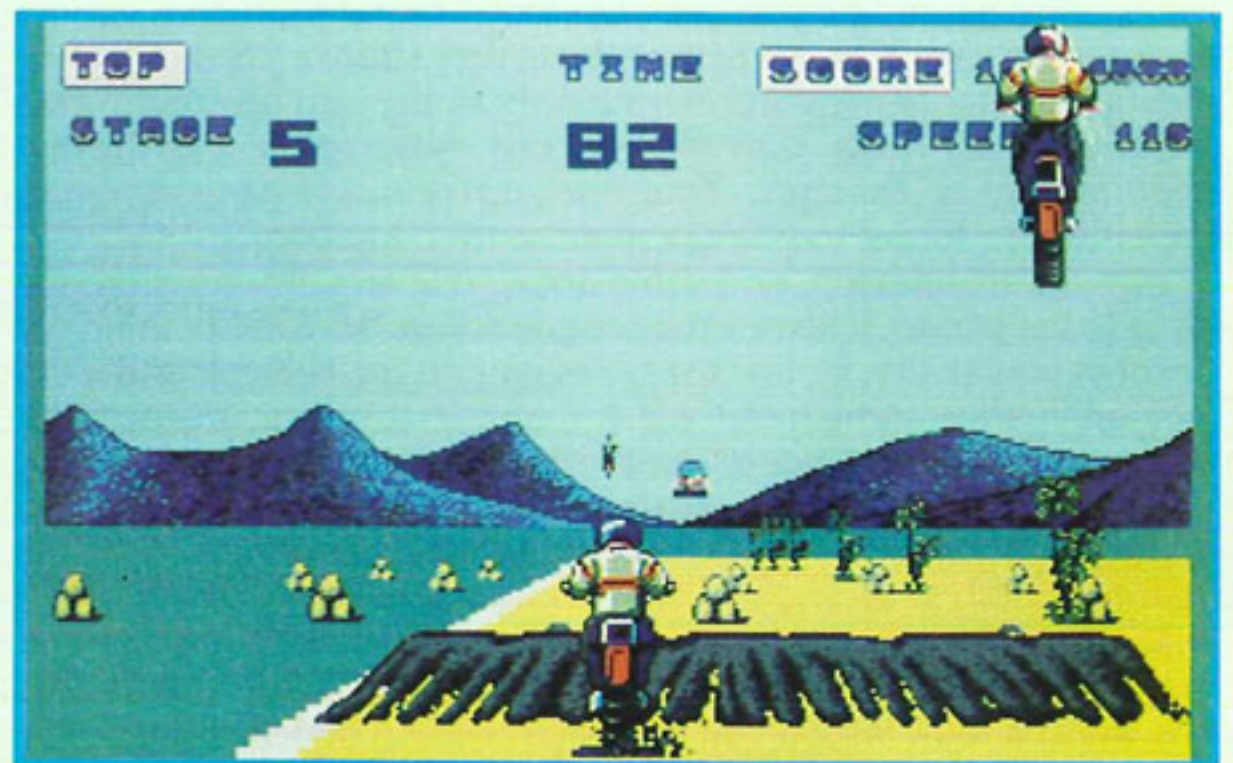
Apparently the definition of the verb to endure is to last long, to stand firm, or to bear up under pressure. So, does Activision's motorcycle game live up to its name? Enduro Racer is a direct copy of the popular arcade game and sets the player in a cross-country race against time. The general idea of the game is to avoid any oncoming obstacles and complete each level within a given time. Sounds simple doesn't it? Well, in theory it should be, but...

Enduro Racer loads automatically and if left untouched the program simply switches between the obligatory high score table and an options screen. It is on the options screen that we find the game's first little quirk. The player may select the number of players, the method of control, the desired sound effects and the like by using pull down menus. This method, although quite feasible, is somewhat complex. To keep changing between the mouse and joystick can become quite tiresome - the motorbike can be controlled with the mouse, but if you want to have any chance of winning you will need to use the joystick option.

The game starts with the players lined up on the starting line; the timer counts down and then they're off. The first level sees

the riders on a dirt track. As I mentioned, the game is against the clock. There are other riders, but as far as I could see their only role is to get in the way. The only real object of the game appears to be to avoid obstacles which take the form of rocks, water, touring buses etc. Included on the track are ramps, which help the rider traverse the landscape and avoid any obstacles. The rider must pull a wheelie before hitting a ramp and if this simple feat is not accomplished the player will lose speed and perform a hand-stand on the handlebars - weird! The event, if you manage to keep within the time limits, takes place over five different terrains each providing different challenges.

Overall, I fail to agree with other comments made about the game, such as, "Best coin-op conversion". Fair enough, Enduro racer is not too bad but, like Loricel's 500cc Grand Prix, I found the game lacked playability. The controls seemed to be just a little insensitive and the strange method of the option selection did not add to its user-friendliness. Enduro Racer is surely only for dedicated fans, a brave try which unfortunately doesn't work.



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Ere Informatique's Turbo GT is yet another of those overhead race games. While the game loads we are presented with a nicely digitized picture of the game's author, Christophe Andreani. Monsieur Andreani certainly looks like a cool dude, but I do hope he hasn't started a new craze whereby every programmer will insist on having his ugly mug displayed on screen. The visage of the egotistical programmer soon fades and we are left to marvel at a very well drawn, futuristic car. Luckily, Ere Informatique are probably exempt from English trading standards; the actual cars that race look more like kiddy-cars!

After the usual rigmarole of deciding the difficulty of the track, the number of players and etc., the game itself is allowed to commence. Four cars compete in each race, the computer controlling any unattended vehicle. After the initial countdown - they're off! The computer cleverly controls its cars at different speeds, thus allowing everyone a fair chance of winning. The player's cars can be controlled either from the keyboard or via a joystick. Movements are all relatively simple with straightforward left, right acceleration and braking controls.

Each of the cars, computer-controlled ones excluded, tend to snake around corners as if they had encountered some stray patch of black ice, making driving particularly hard. There are four separate levels to compete in, each level containing five increasingly difficult circuits. The more difficult tracks really do test the cars' manoeuvrability, the narrow bottle-necks and the tight corners testing the controls to the full.

The usual drone of engines constantly reminds the players that they are driving high-performance motor cars and not Sinclair C5s. But, apart from these meagre effects, the game's sound is minimal. The graphics, too, are somewhat bare. The odd advert, daring anyone to buy Karate for their Oric, helped to add a little humour.

Turbo GT is yet another case of a good game hidden behind only adequate presentation. This is unfortunate because, had greater care been taken with the game's production, I feel Turbo GT would surely have been a contender, alongside Electric Dreams' Super Sprint, for the best overhead race game. Still, should you want a reasonably priced racer, then Turbo GT can supply wonderful two-player action.

Turbo GT



Karting Grand Prix



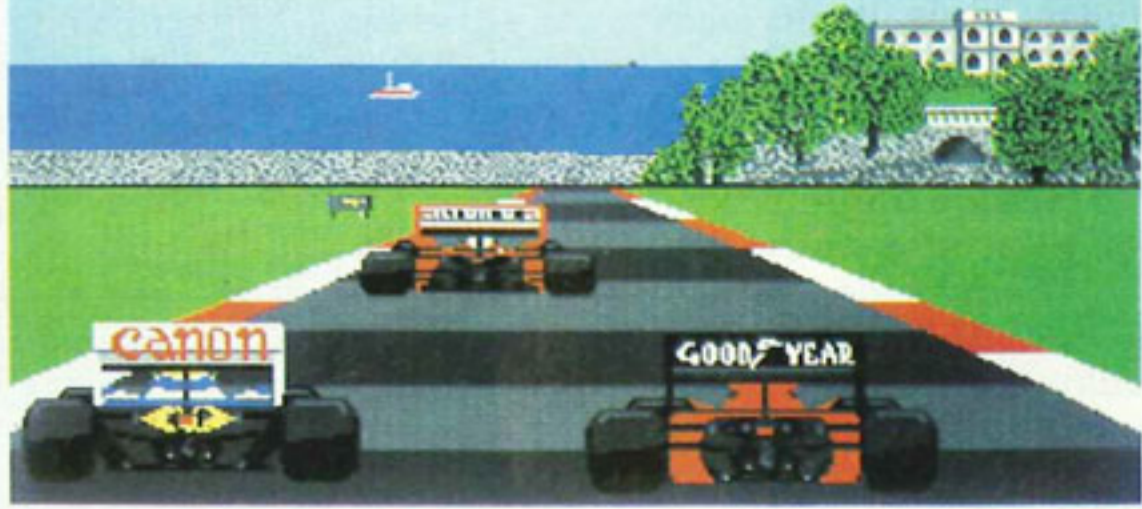
Karting Grand Prix is available from Anco as one of their budget-price games, and I'm afraid it shows. The packaging, however, with its shiny silver inlay, is quite fetching. This, together with the price, may make it attractive to the potential buyer. Even the screenshots on the back cover look good. So, having been drawn to the game by its professional presentation, I loaded it with considerable excitement - after all, Super Sprint was good, and this looked even better!

During the initial loading, which, incidentally, is not automatic, the screen changes from the usual pitch black to display a very colourful title screen - a couple of karts racing under a Dunlop bridge in an alpine setting - very nice! On completion of the load the player (or, if you can find a fellow masochist, players) is asked to choose his or her options. Firstly, the type of tyres must be decided upon, soft or hard compounds. The weather conditions must also be selected: wet, dry, and ice are all simulated. The speed of the game is determined by the choice of drive-sprocket the player takes; the smaller the cog the faster the action. The degree of difficulty must be selected before (finally) the track is picked and the race action begins.

Graphically, the track and the surrounding elements are quite detailed. The game's sound is, although a little thin, just about adequate. After my marvelling at the screen, the action itself soon began. The four karts took off in an anti-clockwise direction, snaking their way around the track. It soon became apparent, however, that my kart was bringing up the rear - the computer-controlled karts seemed to fly around the course while my driver would have found it quicker to get out and push! The problem lay in the controls themselves. Forward and back joystick movements provide the acceleration and braking, while left and right take care of the steering. It proved impossible, however, to steer and accelerate simultaneously. This major error became the game's biggest let-down.

Overall, Karting Grand Prix is a poor game. Its graphics and sound are not outstanding, but they suffice. It is the gameplay itself which destroys its credibility. Like Titus Software's Crazy Cars, Karting Grand Prix seems to be a case of nice package, shame about the game!

Lap:1 Speed:116 Score:0008 Gear:5
Revs: 6325



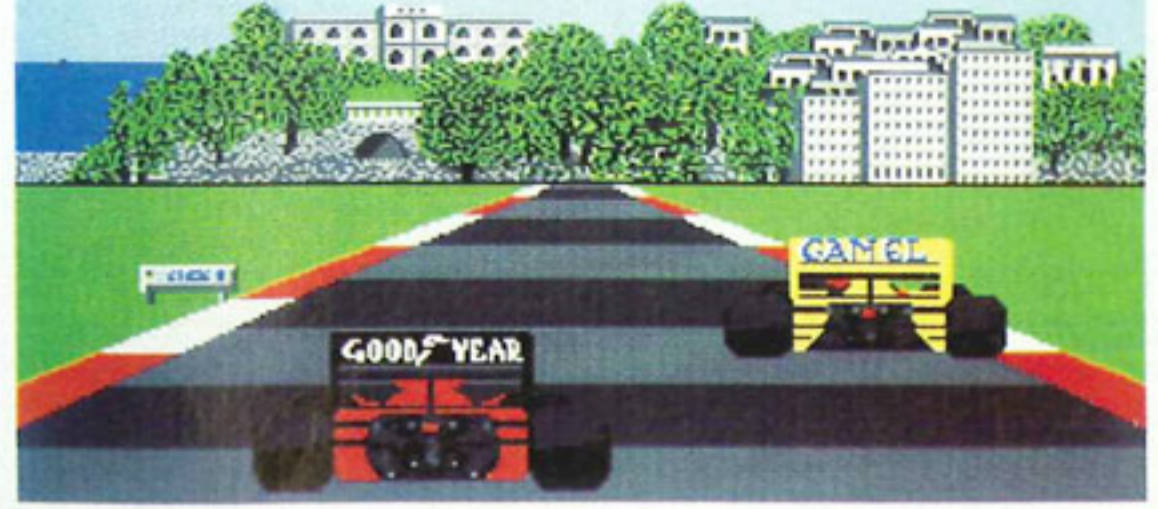
Formula 1 Grand Prix

Have you ever eaten a hearty Sunday lunch and then settled in your favourite armchair all ready to watch the Grand Prix? Have you ever wondered just what it would be like to compete in the race? Well, whether or not you have, the opportunity is now here. Formula 1 Grand Prix has been released by Tynesoft under their Micro Value budget label.

The program comes on two disks and loads with a digitized picture of the Williams FW12. Accompanying the loader is a sampled version of Fleetwood Mac's, The Chain - do the band receive any royalties? About half way through the loading procedure the computer asks for the second data disk, therefore suggesting that perhaps further circuits are in the pipeline.

The first thing to be encountered by the player is the option screen. Here the player may choose which car he would like, there's a selection of five, ranging from Ferrari F187 to Lotus 99T, it's up to you. As with Loriciel's 500cc Grand Prix, a player may decide whether he wishes to compete in a single race or the entire championship. There are six tracks to race on and the player can also decide how many laps are to be raced. Just to help break in

Lap:1 Speed:220 Score:0202 Gear:6
Revs: 9900



a track there is also a practice-lap option; this is best taken advantage of in order to become familiar with the bends. The final option displays all the lap and circuit records.

After all the relevant choices have been made, the game itself begins. The view shown is just behind your car, the track winding quickly towards you. A starting light begins the race. For reasons best known to the programmers, there seems to be no way of knowing how far behind the leader you are, or indeed if you are the leader. The game therefore tends to become a lesson in overtaking and cornering. It does have one or two little quirks: just scraping a fellow-driver's tyres causes a violent explosion, and I even managed to stall my car! - Still, maybe this can be classed as added realism.

The sound effects consist of the now standard engine drone and the 'kaboom' as two cars collide and, on the whole, they are sufficient. Some of the graphics are well presented, the scrolling background is used well and changes with every track. The track itself, however, is patterned with dark and light shades of grey and can be very off-putting.

Overall, Formula 1 Grand Prix is something and nothing. It is by no means an outstanding game but in view of its reasonable budget price it may be worth a viewing.

Crazy Cars

Titus Software - now here's a new company. French eh? Well, if they produce games that are half as good as their compatriots, Ere Informatique, we should have a winner on our hands. The game comes packaged in a beautiful black cardboard box without any instructions. Picture the scene: a young lad walks into a software store, clutched tightly in his hand are those precious notes which he has been saving for weeks. He carefully surveys the shelves and spies Crazy Cars. Wow! Just look at those screen shots, this must be the ultimate car game! He quickly hands over his money, rushes home and loads the game... Five minutes later he reverts back to playing the far more enjoyable ST Writer word processor.

I must point out, however, that there are some things in this game's favour. Crazy Cars comes on an eye-catching white disk, fashioned in genuine Japanese plastic. Why do I dislike this game so much? After all, it does look good judging from the screen photographs.

Crazy Cars comes on a single disk and loads automatically, pausing only briefly to display a picture of a Ferrari and play a piece of music. Once loaded, the track appears with your car, a sporty Mercedes convertible, sat squarely in the middle of the track. The

car's controls are basic: left and right to steer, forward and back to accelerate and brake. With that in mind, I floored the accelerator and sped off. The car screeches around corners nicely and overtaking a cheap Lamborghini Countach kit-car look-alike seems simple. It is not until you manage to hit one of the other pseudo-prestige cars that you realise your big mistake. Bumping another competitor causes your car to leap several feet up in the air and by the time it has landed another car crashes into the back of you causing the process to repeat itself. Having bounced your way to last position you can wave goodbye to all hope of ever winning, the timer merrily ticks on until it reaches zero. A beautiful picture of up-ended cars proclaims "game over", and a player is invited to enter his name on the high-score table. My fiancée currently holds the top slot; she is the only person I know who has completed level one. Her secret: "Drive like the wind and don't hit anything!"

The authors describe Crazy Cars as a three-dimensional real-time simulation. This description should be taken to the office of fair trading. How many Mercedes do you know that can reach speeds of over 265mph and bounce 10 feet into the air? Overall, Crazy Cars is an exercise in pretty graphics, nothing more. If Titus manage to make any money with this game they will owe it all to the packaging designer. It drives me crazy to think of all the unfortunate people who have already bought Crazy Cars. Avoid it!

SCORE 359158 HIGH 1726878 TIME 37 SPEED 249



SCORE 632958 HIGH 1726878 TIME 11 SPEED 244



Super Sprint



How refreshing it is to find a racing-car game that doesn't pretend to be anything else but fun. Super Sprint is yet another arcade conversion but, before you all head for the hills, this game offers the exact features found on the original and, unlike countless other arcade conversions, Super Sprint loses nothing in its transition. The game adopts the overhead view, players getting a bird's-eye view of the track. Whilst loading, the screen has just enough time to display a scrolling string of credits and then it's straight to the option screens.

After selecting his car and which method of control he wishes to use, a player then has two choices. Either to head straight for the track or to peruse the high-score tables.

The contestants must first decide on which track the race is to start. There are eight different circuits and four levels of difficulty. Once chosen, the players must indicate their intention to play and then commence the game. The cars travel in an anti-clockwise direction around the track; any cars not being driven by humans are known as drones and are controlled by the computer - believe me the machine certainly knows what it is doing! Whilst the cars wind their way around the track, certain bonuses may be acquired. Boxes containing scores should be collected for immediate bonuses while golden spanners should be collected for later enhancements. For every four spanners collected, a player may customize his car with better traction, greater acceleration or a higher top speed - alternatively, his score may be increased.

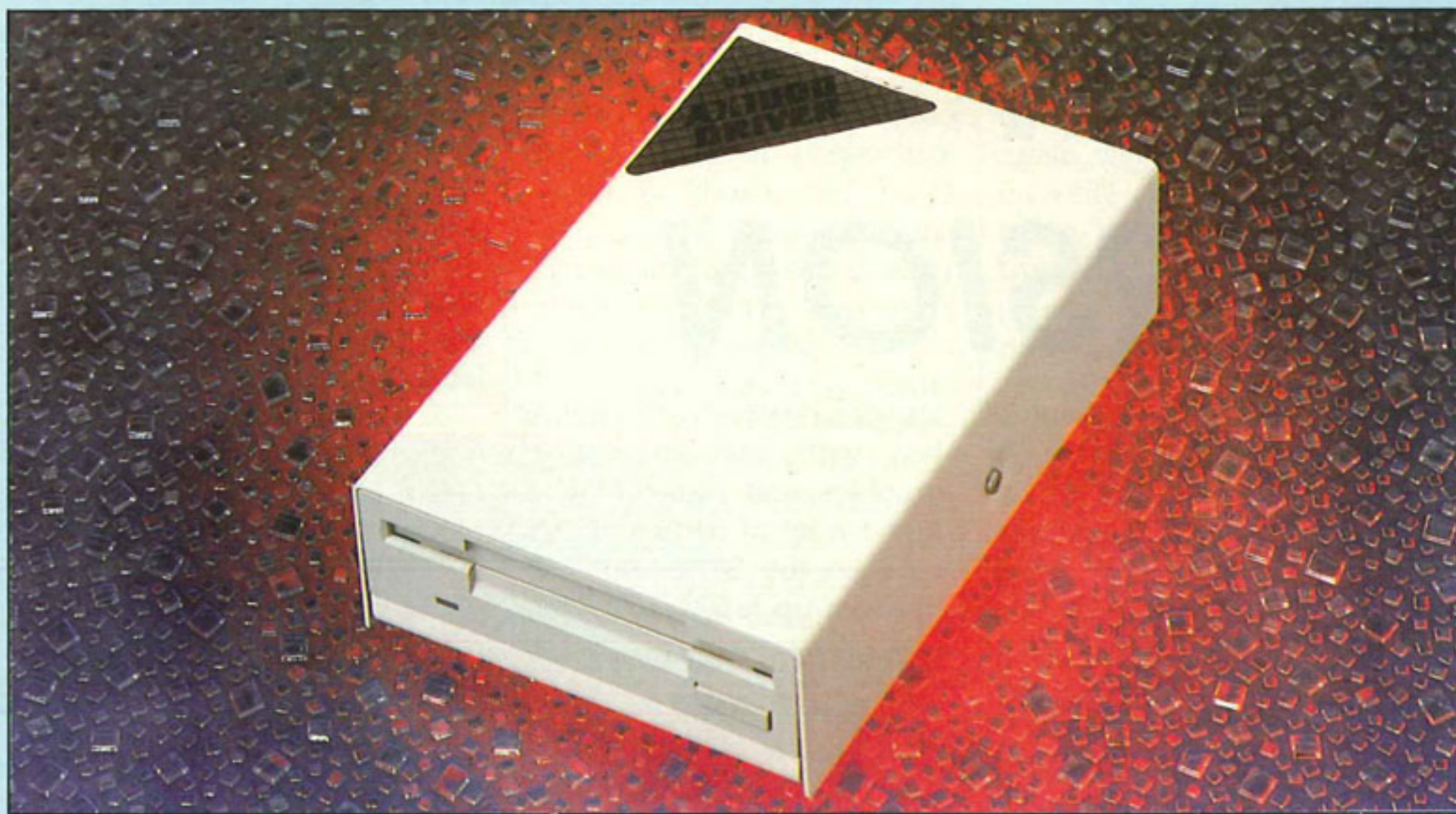
As the game progresses, various added hazards are to be encountered. The obligatory puddles and oil slicks abound and other hazards, such as whirlwinds and moving blockades all impede the driver in his constant quest for the chequered flag. Control of the cars is extremely simple: left and right movements steer the cars and the fire button acts as an accelerator. At the end of each race only the winning driver may keep his score and customised features. All of the cars are depicted in the winner's enclosure, the last-placed car being given major repairs. After the addition of the winning scores the race continues on yet another, tougher, track.

Super Sprint is a genuine fun game, allowing up to three players to compete simultaneously. The game's graphics are well drawn although a little basic; the sound effects, too, are a little simple. But with the tremendous playability these minor points are negligible. Super Sprint is the finest game of its type, I loved it!

To Sum Up...

| Game | Difficulty | House | Price | Telephone |
|--------------------|------------|------------|--------|--------------|
| Crazy Cars | Very Hard | Titus | £19.95 | N/A |
| Test Drive | Hard | EA | £24.95 | 0753 49442 |
| Formula 1 | Easy | Tynesoft | £19.95 | 091 414 4611 |
| Super Sprint | Easy | Activision | £14.99 | 01-431 1101 |
| Karting Grand Prix | Average | Anco | £ 9.95 | 0322 92513 |
| Turbo GT | Easy | Infogrames | £N/A | 01-364 0123 |
| Super Cycle | Average | Epyx | £24.95 | 021 356 3388 |
| 500cc | Average | Microids | £19.99 | 0543 414188 |
| Enduro Racer | Ave-Hard | Activision | £14.99 | 01 431 1101 |

| Game | Graphics | Sound | Addictiveness | Overall |
|--------------------|----------|-------|---------------|---------|
| Crazy Cars | 56% | 60% | 20% | 36% |
| Test Drive | 78% | 80% | 60% | 73% |
| Formula 1 | 50% | 60% | 50% | 58% |
| Super Sprint | 81% | 65% | 75% | 75% |
| Karting Grand Prix | 38% | 30% | 10% | 24% |
| Turbo GT | 41% | 35% | 40% | 44% |
| Super Cycle | 66% | 50% | 70% | 69% |
| 500cc | 56% | 40% | 50% | 56% |
| Enduro Racer | 63% | 75% | 50% | 59% |



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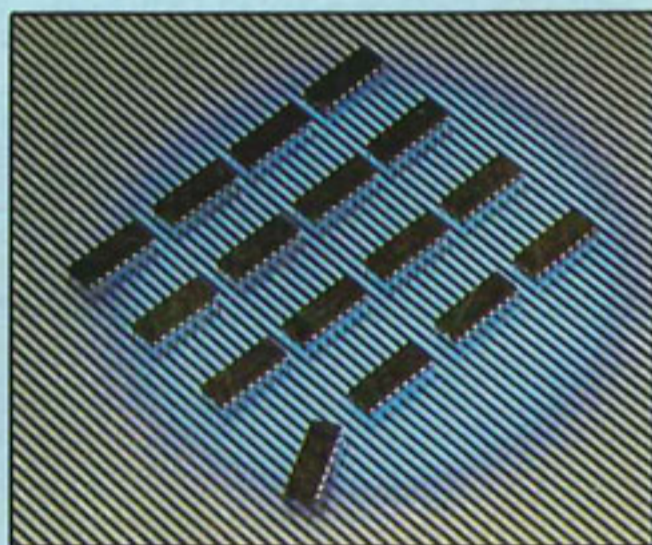
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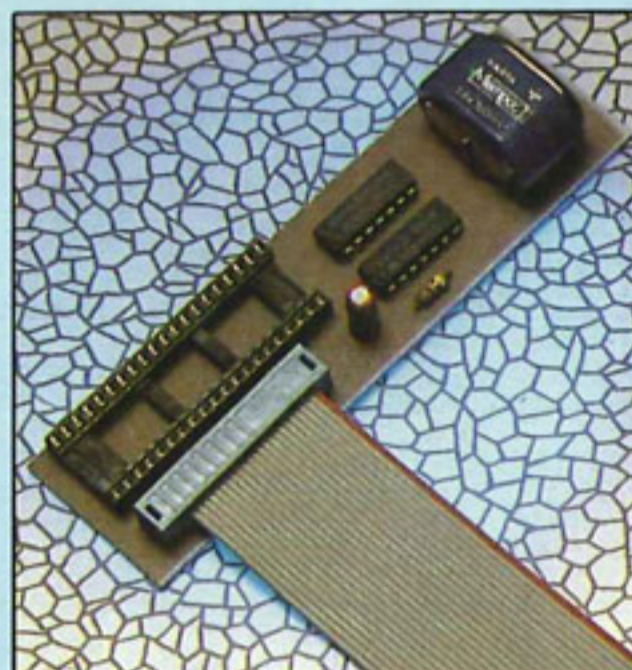
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CASE FOR CONVERSION

Despite growing criticism, arcade licences are still popular with software houses. As most of the criticism is aimed at eight-bit conversions, a lot of companies are now turning to the power of the Atari ST with resounding success.

In this, and the following issues, we will be reviewing recent arcade games and giving you some idea of how you can expect the game to convert to the ST. Whether we are right or wrong will be interesting to note when (or if) the game is finally released!

are grabbed or hit by any of the gang members, then your energy (displayed at the top of the screen) decreases, and, once this falls below zero, you will lose a life. The game ends when all of your lives are lost.

At the end of each level you will find one of the gang leaders. This guy is bigger and uglier than the rest, and must be defeated in order to proceed. His energy is shown at the top of the screen and acts in the same way as your own, with each punch that you land doing damage to him.

and other games of this genre lies with the interesting graphics and music. There aren't a lot of games of this type on the ST though, so beat'em-up fans might wel-

pand your arsenal to include lasers and bombs. The roaming nasties are pretty weird - have you ever seen green balls of fuzz, or leaping potato heads? How about bomb-chucking dwarves? Some require different weapons to destroy, but all are equally lethal.

Once you reach the end of the forest, you are faced by two egg-spitting, oval heads. These aren't easy to contend with, but with patience and couple of bombs,



Vigilante
- Irem Corp.

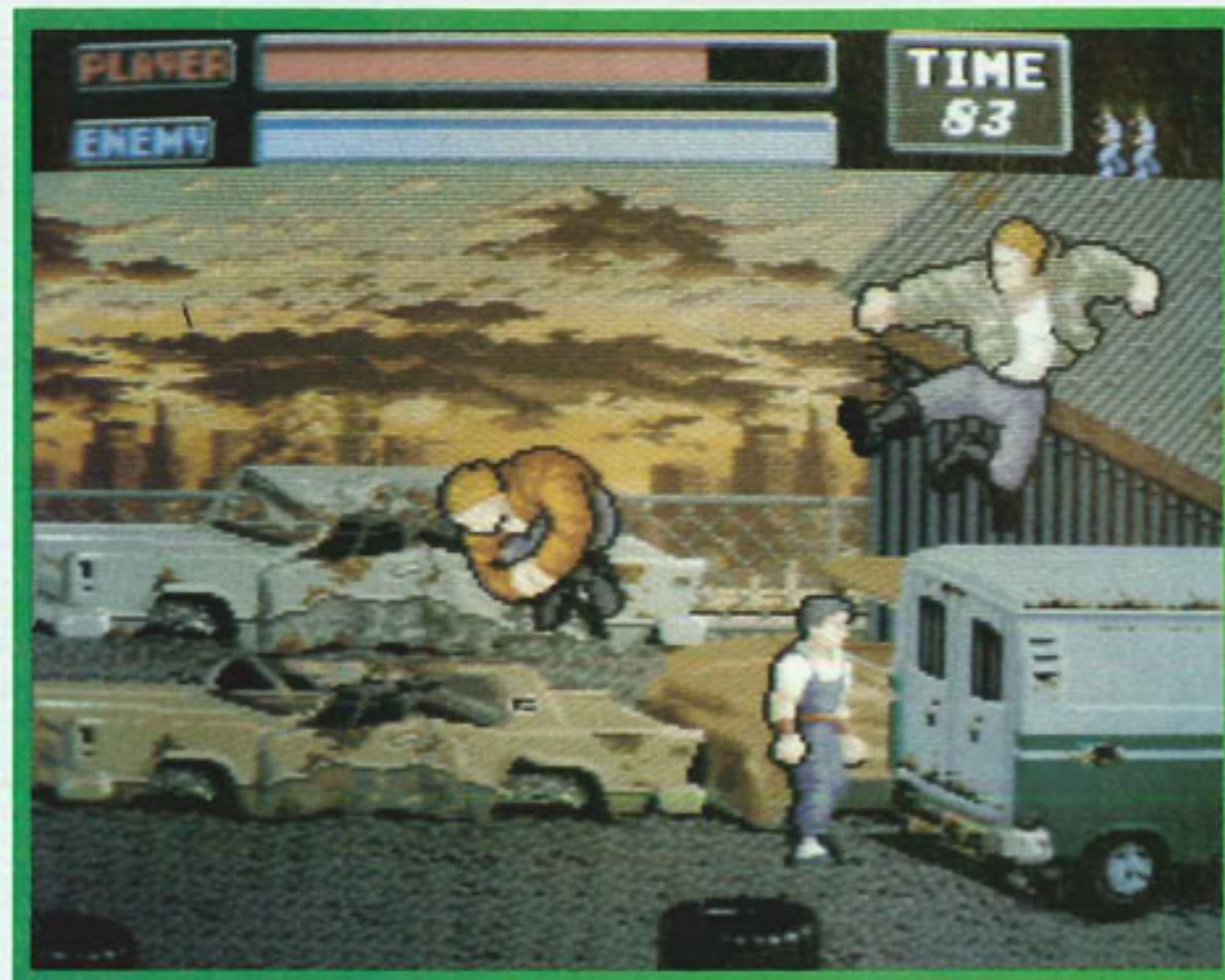
Irem Corp's new game is in a very similar mould to Kung Fu Master, released by the same company back in 1984. This time, you have to save Madonna from a gang of Skinheads by fighting your way through five horizontally-scrolling levels and defending yourself against the gang members with a limited variety of punches and kicks.

The type of enemies that must be disposed of include; neck-grabbing henchmen, chain-brandishing thugs, head-punching punks and motorcycle freaks. If you

Vigilante, as you might have gathered, is highly unoriginal, with many other games using the same format. It is enjoyable to play for a while, but we aren't too sure if it will make it big in the arcades as it breaks no new ground in technical achievement.

None of the gameplay should have to be removed in a conversion to the ST, as it is hardly the most complex of games. The detailed and realistic graphics may have to be toned down in colour, but the quality of the animation and parallax scrolling shouldn't push the computer too far.

The only genuine difference between Vigilante



come a competent version, but not everybody is going to want to save Madonna...

Labyrinth Runner - Konami

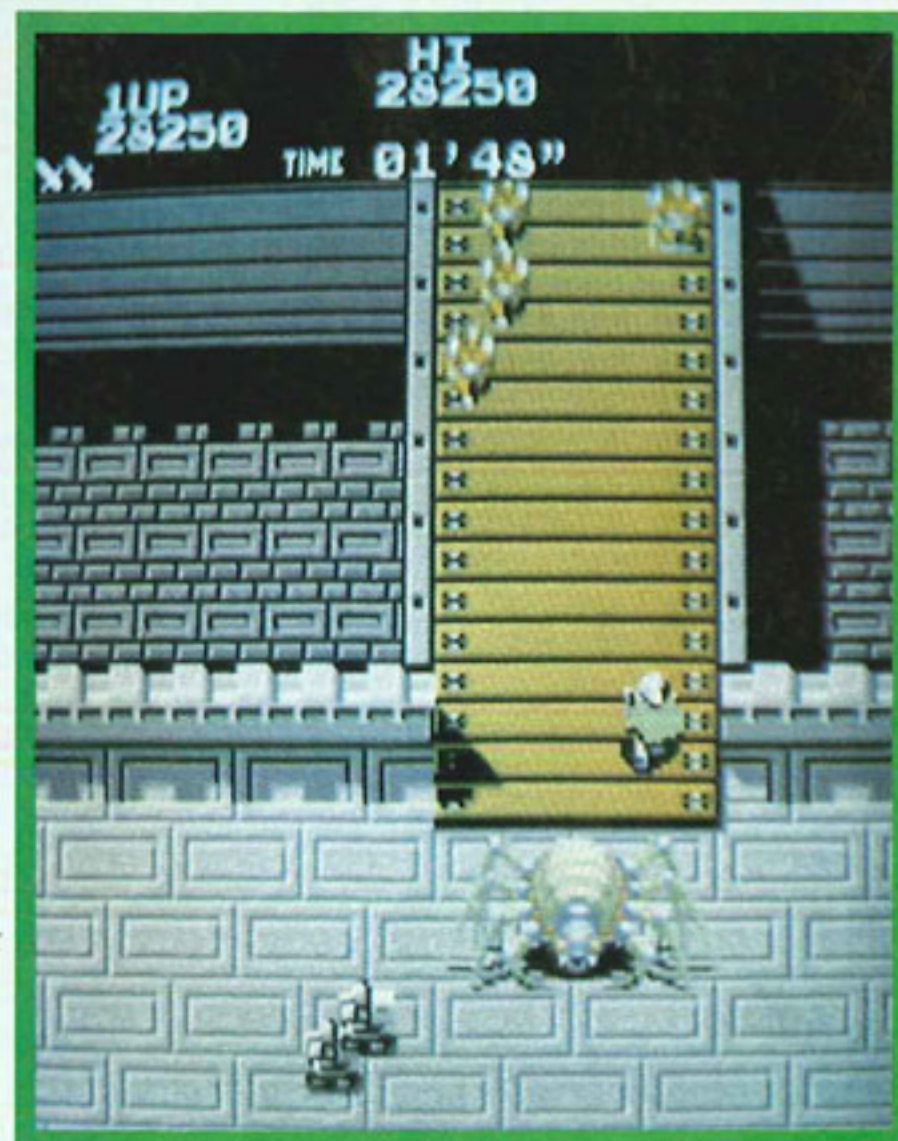
Amidst karate, racing and shoot'em-up games, Labyrinth Runner brings a fresh approach to arcade games. Although the scenario and theme might seem quite old, having to rescue your beloved Papaya from the devil's castle - the execution of the game certainly makes a change from the run-of-the-mill arcade releases of late.

You view your medieval-style knight from above, and the action starts off in a forest. At first, you have only a single shot-gun for your protection, but by destroying

you will learn their movements and vulnerabilities.

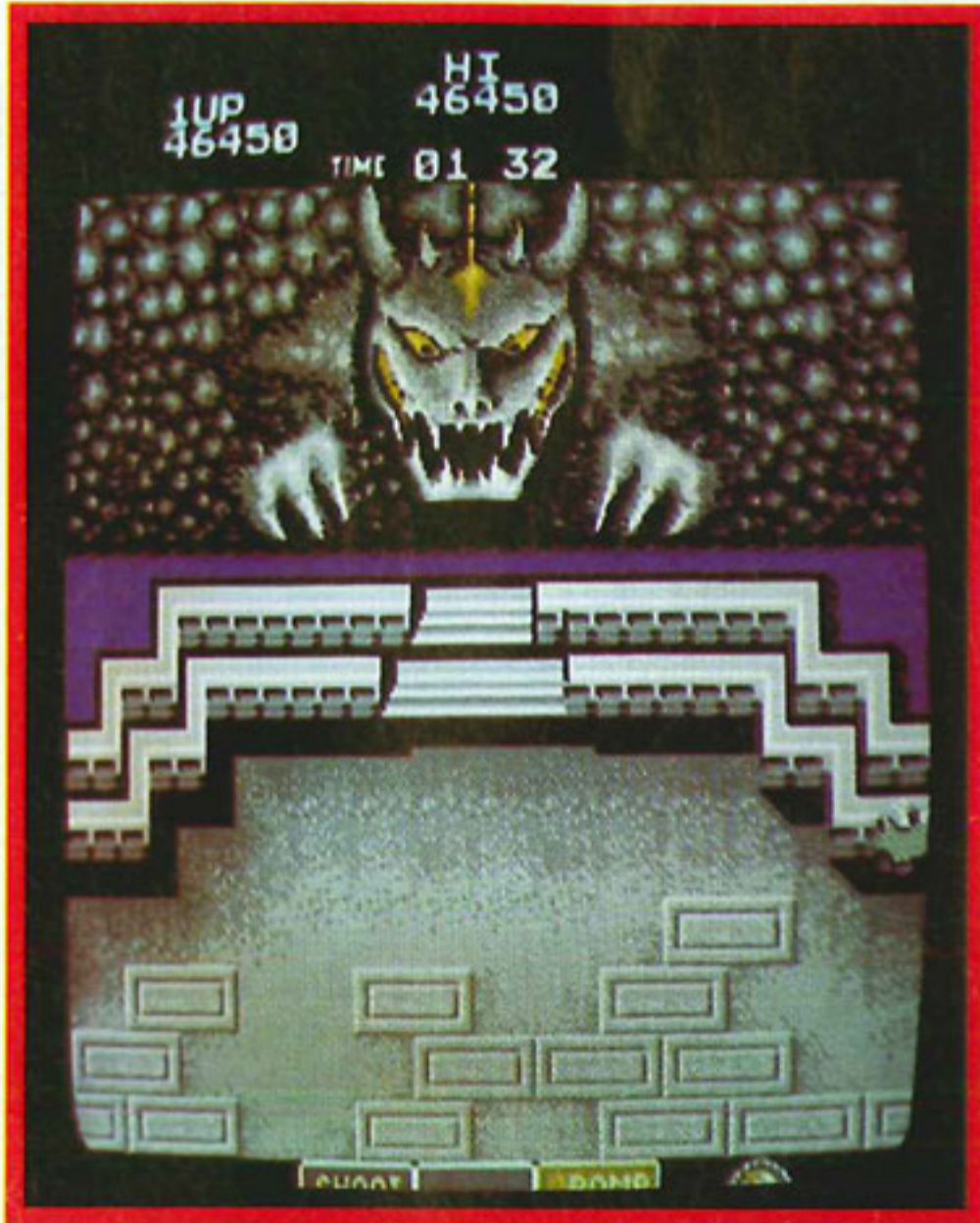
The next stage takes place on the castle walls, with soldiers, spiders and black knights to overcome. At the end of this stage you have to destroy a demon who rushes from one side of a wall to the other.

After you have pro-



gressed through the two mazes and disposed of the

vicious, overgrown insect at the end, it's time to tackle the truck. In this part of the game, you race around on a train track, destroying the other trucks and shooting rocks that are obstructing your path. This is the most enjoyable bit of Labyrinth Runner and helps make the game



enthralling and original.

Visually, Labyrinth Runner may not be all that spectacular compared to other releases. Indeed, our first impression was not one of ecstasy, but the emphasis is on fun. The graphics are quite small, but are beautifully coloured, with adequate detail and animation, and are suitably weird and crazy. They help to reduce tension and prevent frustration from setting in too quickly.

The game isn't too easy to complete, yet it has that 'one-more-go' appeal. Hopefully, none of this would be lost in a conversion. And neither should any of the graphics or music, which should both fit well within the ST's capabilities. As far as we know, there are no plans for an independent release, but keep your fingers crossed! In our opinion, Labyrinth Runner would work even better as a computer game than it has as an arcade game!!

Rack'em Up - Konami

Unfortunately, many people

who dismiss pool as just a game of pockets and balls will treat Rack'em Up with a fair amount of scepticism. However, those who recognise the skill involved in the game will be astounded by the quality and realism in this video interpretation.

You can play either nine or fifteen-ball billiards, each version requiring you to knock in the balls in rotation. However, as long as you hit the lowest-numbered ball, it doesn't matter which one you pot. The number of points that you score is identical to the number of the ball you potted.

If you fail to pot any ball within three shots, or you

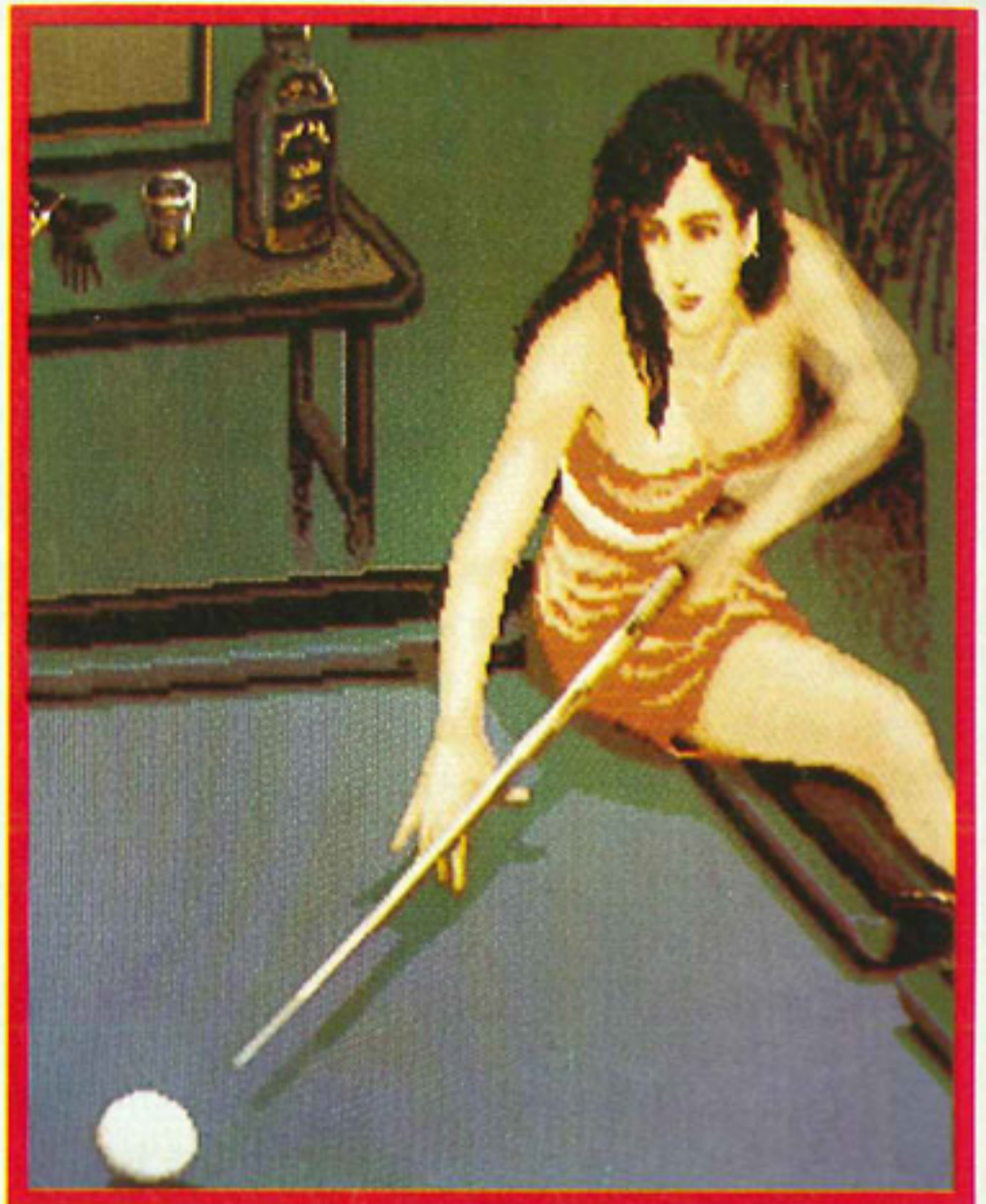
shoot the cue ball into a pocket, then you will lose a 'life'. You have three at the beginning of the game which ends when they have all been lost.

Once you do pot a ball you are allowed three more

the most points. You then play again, with the ultimate aim being to get the highest percentage possible.

Each shot that you take can have a different spin and the speed can be varied. This is achieved by moving the joystick in any direction for selecting the spin, and pressing the fire button when the speed meter is at the desired power.

The control over the cue ball and the movements of the other balls help to make Rack'em Up one of the most realistic pool simulations to date. The graphics themselves are quite sophisticated, with a view from behind the cue ball when you are lining up your shot, allowing you to see what you are going to hit first. You also get a close-up of your character when the shot is taken; the characters all bear a remarkable resemblance to the main actors in 'The Colour of



ST, but we shall have to see whether it is licensed out, and, if it is, whether the programmers are able to interpret the realism from arcade to computer. As far as we can see, this would be the only problem that would have to be overcome, but if it can't be tackled successfully, then the whole game concept and appeal would be ruined. Rack'em Up may not have much commercial potential either, as it is aimed at a limited market, and we are in two minds as to whether any company would pick it up.

R-Type - Irem Corp

Unlike the other arcade games in this issue, a licence for R-Type has already been picked up, with Activision saying that is a 'fair assumption' that there will be an Atari ST version. Having been a big hit in the arcades, how will R-Type fare on the 16-bit computers?

The basic idea is to pilot your powerful R-9 interstellar fighter, with its awesome fire power, through six levels of alien onslaught. As you progress, you will find more weapons to add to your ship, which prove useful when wasting the aliens.

R-Type is very similar to Nemesis, yet has a lot more thrills included in the gameplay. The weapons available include: fire blasters, missiles, lasers that bounce around the screen,



shots to get the next one in a pocket. When the table is cleared, the winner in a two-player game is the one with

Money'!

Billiard and snooker fans would obviously welcome a good version on the

and a shield which you can fire at the oncoming aliens with devastating effect. You can also hold down the fire button and then release it in order to shoot out a lethal dose of energy!

The most impressive aspect of R-Type is the size and detail on some of the ships. While the smaller sprites thunder around at tremendous speed, the larger aliens are really awesome, and even more deadly. On one level, half of it is taken up by an enormous mothership. This has to be shot in various places before it is totally destroyed, and some nifty movement is required to avoid the ship. You also have to defeat an alien structure at the end of each level, with the most spectacular being a tube-like plant with a blue eye, which is its only vulnerable spot. While you are attempting to shoot the eye, you have to dodge a snake-style creature which expands and moves from tube to tube.

The graphics in R-Type are amazing, and might

surpass even the capabilities of the ST. Detail is second to none, and the colour scheme is truly excellent. All of the aliens move realistically, with great attention to animation, and, while the screen can occasionally get very full, you are always aware of the position of your own ship, and it never looks 'messy'.

R-Type is certainly a good choice of licence for Activision, if only for its huge success in the arcades. After all, the name itself should see the game leap up the charts. However, we aren't too sure if they will be able to recreate the same atmosphere in a conversion, or if they will be able to match the speed of the arcade original. R-Type is better than any other game of the same ilk because of its quality and polished look. If any of this was lost in a conversion over to the ST, then you would only end up with a mediocre shoot'em-up. A good conversion is possible if a lot of time is spent researching and programming, and the end result should be worth



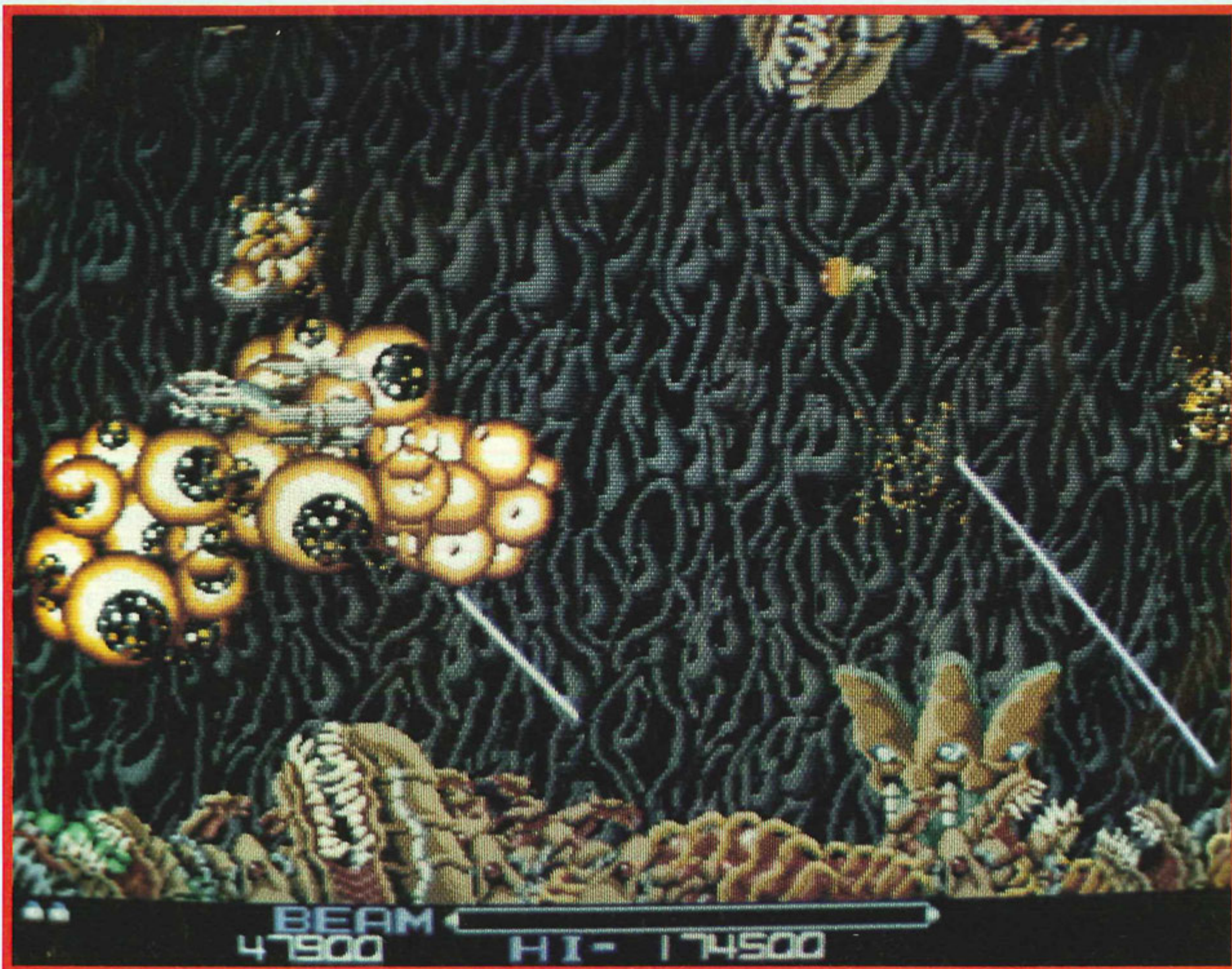
it. Let's hope so anyway!

News

Activision have also announced their plans for the conversion of 'Afterburner' for most formats, including the ST. Rod Cousens promised in a recent statement that it 'will be THE Number One for Christmas 88', and that any murmurs that it couldn't be successfully converted were to be dispelled. Roll on Christmas?

Two other arcade licences have been negotiated with Sega by Activision, these being SDI and Time Scanner. SDI, described as a 'revolutionary new game', apparently has you seeking out the hostile forces rather than trying to avoid them. Time Scanner is a pinball simulation which Activision says will 'make sure that all other real pinball tables are unused'.

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(Colour only one or two joysticks required.)

TANGLEWOOD

Why settle for adventures with one or two characters? Tanglewood has five! And Tanglewood is all graphics (over 700K of them) and it's totally mouse controlled, with no text entry, and unlike other adventures it's nearly always possible to finish unless you do something deliberately stupid. Tanglewood is also played in real time so you have only ten days to find the mining contracts and some areas are only accessible at night.

(Colour only)



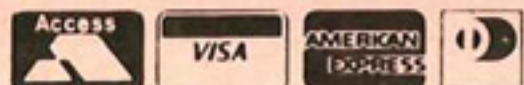
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ENTERTAINMENT SOFTWARE



So much has happened in the home-computer's short history that we often forget how new the industry is. The year was 1983, the place Birmingham in England. To Geoff Brown, the centre of the country was a logical location from which to run and direct an entertainment software distribution company. This prescience very quickly proved correct for Centersoft, a name which derives from a combination of its location and its product. On a recent visit to their substantial and impressive headquarters, I spoke to Product Marketing Manager, Richard Tidsall. 'During the first year of trading, Centersoft serviced retailers with entertainment software. Britain was developing a thriving but independent entertainment software industry, but outside of the arcades, game players had yet to see a game from the States. Concurrently, across the Atlantic, the American entertainment software industry was growing at an equally rapid rate, but it soon became obvious at computer shows that U.S. software was, at that time, far more advanced.'

The first year of trading showed a profit, albeit it modest by the standards they set today. 'The Sinclair Spectrum was adequately catered for with home-grown software, but Commodore and Atari owners were missing out on a wealth of software.' A brave step was taken for such a young

company: to travel State-side and negotiate for the rights to ship across American software. Through this new and impressive company, the American software industry learnt of untapped sales potential in Europe. Almost exactly a year after Centersoft was established, a company was formed to deal with U.S. software. 'Much of the money made in the first year of trading was ploughed back into the company and new developments were swiftly moving into action. In July 1984, we began shipping across software from the States on the U.S.

Gold Label. We were certain that the software would be received well and, in turn, the American software houses were using us as a vehicle to increase their marketing potential.' For a new company, this was an incredible position to be in.

The response was phenomenal! 'We quickly outgrew our existing office and warehouse,



Geoff Brown, company founder

and in August moved to a 15000 square feet complex.' Evidently, the distribution side of the company was exceeding expectations, but I asked Richard whether the material that they were publishing then was purely from external software companies. 'August was a busy month, but at the same time as the mass exodus to the new premises, Gremlin Graphics was formed.' I had always thought that Gremlin Graphics was a totally separate and independent company and I



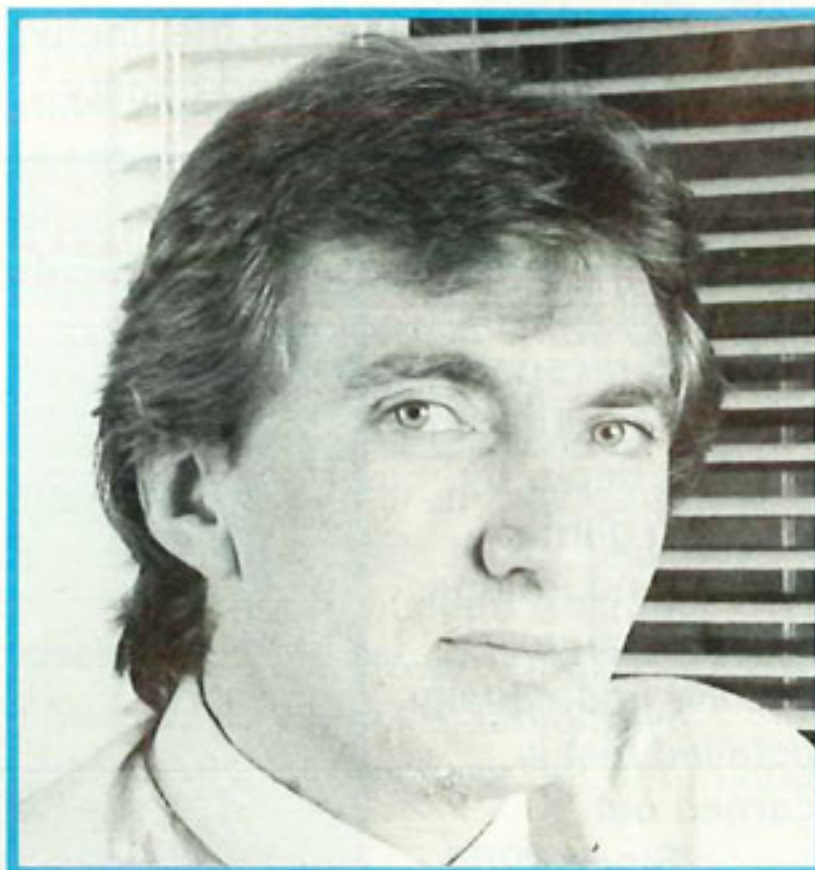
Just some of the awards and other accolades that US Gold has won over the years

was interested to learn about their niche in the organization. 'Gremlin are, to all intents and purposes, in competition with US Gold, even though they are housed in the same building. If we consider that Gremlin would be best for a specific project, we commission them to develop the game.'

During the four years that U.S. Gold has been established, they have published games from the top names in the software industry. 'We are in the fortunate position of being able to choose the very best that software companies have to offer. One of the most surprising successes in our range is Leaderboard from Access. We were afraid that a golfing simulation would only appeal to enthusiasts of the sport, but it became one of our best sellers and it is still selling well. An indication of Leaderboard's success is that we commissioned Access to develop a separate Leaderboard construction set. Epyx, Ultimate, Rainbow Arts are just a few of the software companies who have gained brand recognition in the U.K. through U.S. Gold.

I recalled that Microprose's software packaging once sported the U.S. Gold badge. 'Microprose is a good example of an American company who initially used us to publish and distribute their software over here. At that time, they didn't have the facilities in the U.K. to market their own products. However, once they had established themselves in the market, they dealt with their own publishing.' I wondered whether this had happened with any other companies? 'No, Microprose are unique because their products, i.e. military simulations, do not go out of date. Software companies are well aware that our products are invariably commercially successful and the companies whose software we deal with are happy with the results. In

the last year of trading we paid our various licensors well over £5 million in royalties. U.S. Gold's attractive razzmatazz at shows and software



Tim Chaney, operations director

launches is world famous. 'Our marketing strategies are unprecedented and a lot of time, money and energy goes into stimulating trade and promotion of the product.'

An indication that the money spent on establishing U.S. Gold and Gremlin Graphics was justified, came with the results of the second year's turnover, which exceeded £11 million, tripling the first year. 'Not only was the American software doing well in Britain, their was more than a passing interest on the continent, and so, in October, U.S. Gold offices were established in Germany, France and Spain.' The company's expansion was, to say the least, rapid and the existing Birmingham premises was now the headquarters of an international organization. Subsequently, even larger premises were sought. 'In June 1986 we moved here, to the Holford estate.' They are impressive and at 40,000 square feet, three times larger than the previous offices.

U.S. Gold have put their name to more arcade conversions than any other company and I wondered how they sealed the copyrights from the likes of Sega and Atari. 'Successfully negotiating for copyright is something that we have been doing since U.S. Gold was first established and it is one of the reasons for our success. Coin-op conversions are immensely popular and we represent more than thirty per cent of conversions in the U.K. market.' Converting coin-op games onto home computers is similar to pouring a pint of beer into a thimble! I asked Richard whether the game-playing public's reactions to their conversions were negative. Do they expect too much? 'On the contrary, the conversions are practically scaled-down copies of the original. I think the popularity of all our conversions is proof that they are more than acceptable to the game-playing public. Gauntlet, in particular, was immensely popular, while Roadrunner and Indiana Jones exceeded our high expectations.' The question is, have



US Gold/Centresoft's huge warehouse and packing facility



Out Run progressing nicely through the late stages of its development

U.S. Gold ever released a bad game? (Laughs) 'Of course not!'

The ST came very close to being a catch 22 statistic; units were not being sold because of the lack of software, while companies were unwilling to invest time and money into developing software for the machine because there were so few users. 'From our point of view, as soon as Atari unveiled the ST it was obvious that nothing could touch it for price.' I interjected with the observation that their first release for the ST, Metrocross, was rather late. 'Before you embark on a project you must be sure that it is going to be cost effective.' After the subsequent success of Metrocross, it was all systems go for the ST.

For Epyx, who are based in the States, U.S. Gold was the only candidate in the running to market their products, initially in the U.K. and leading to complete representation throughout Europe. 'Software companies are well aware that the U.S. Gold

badge is widely respected by the game-playing public as a seal of quality and a sign that the software will be good value for money. I was interested to learn who has the unenviable task of separating good quality and commercially successful games from embarrassing flops. 'All software which is presented to us is scrutinized in great depth by our own games testers and, during duplication, a second and equally detailed test is carried out.'

Since 1984 Gremlin Graphics has become one of Europe's top five software houses, a standing which was forged by software writers like Tony Crowther and games such as Locomotive and Suicide Express. 'On the strength of Gremlin's

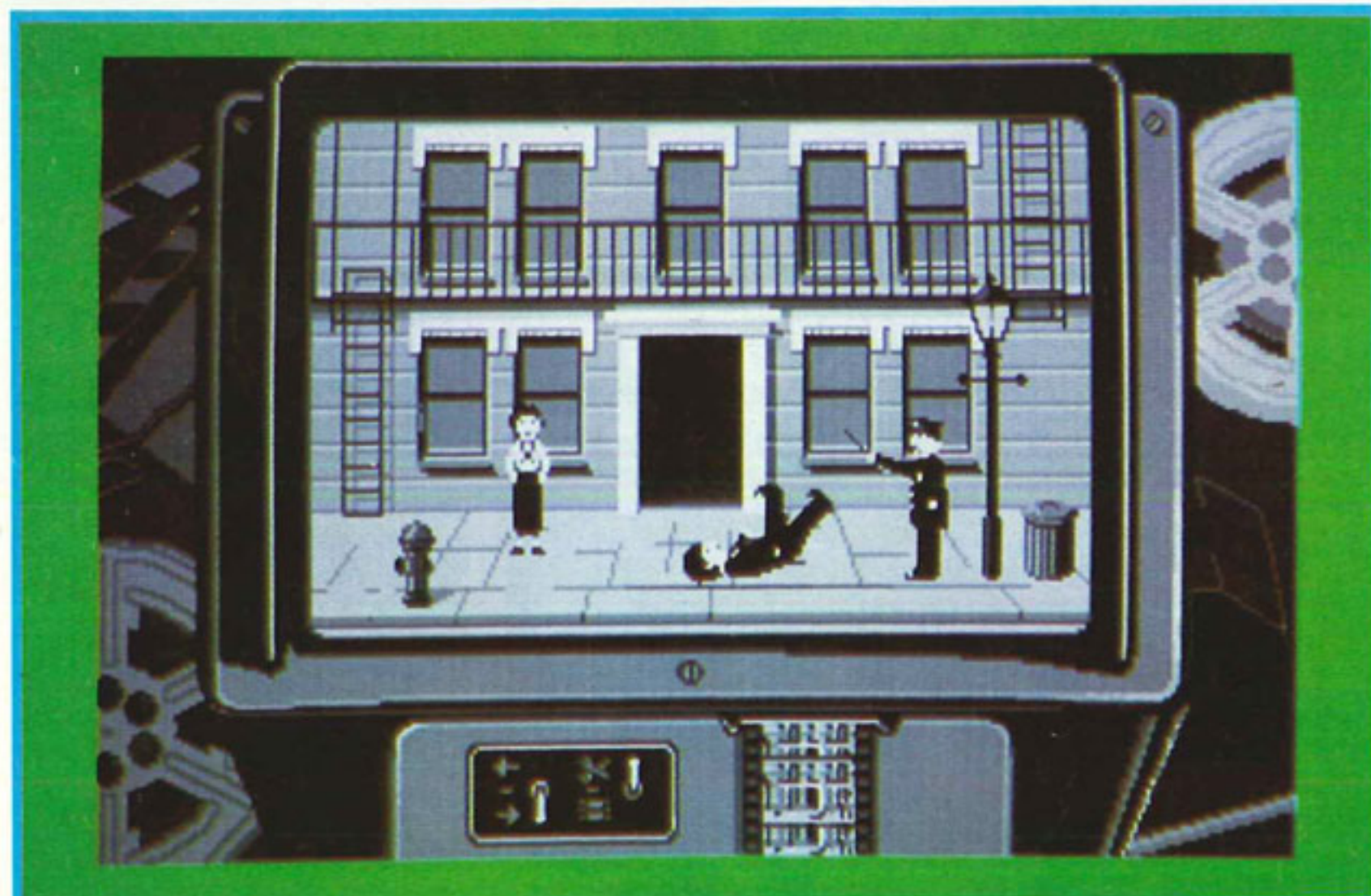
success, we invested half a million pounds into the 'Go' label. 'Go' incorporates Rainbow Arts and Capcom in Europe and the intention is that software which would not suit the U.S. Gold or Gremlin image, will be developed and sold under the Go label. Therefore, the company as a whole can experiment in new territories without affecting the progress of the other brands.' I played a multi-level arcade game which is currently being tested for the Go label which is called Captain America and stars the Marvel comic superhero himself.

I was keen to see what improvements had been made to Outrun since my last visit. 'The eight-bit version of Outrun has sold far beyond our expectations - 175,000 units were sold in the first fortnight.' I can report that the ST version is remarkable and incorporates all of the levels from the arcade game. I was interested to know why the ST version had taken so long. 'Timing is not important with Outrun, as it will always be popular and so there is little point in rushing.' Surely

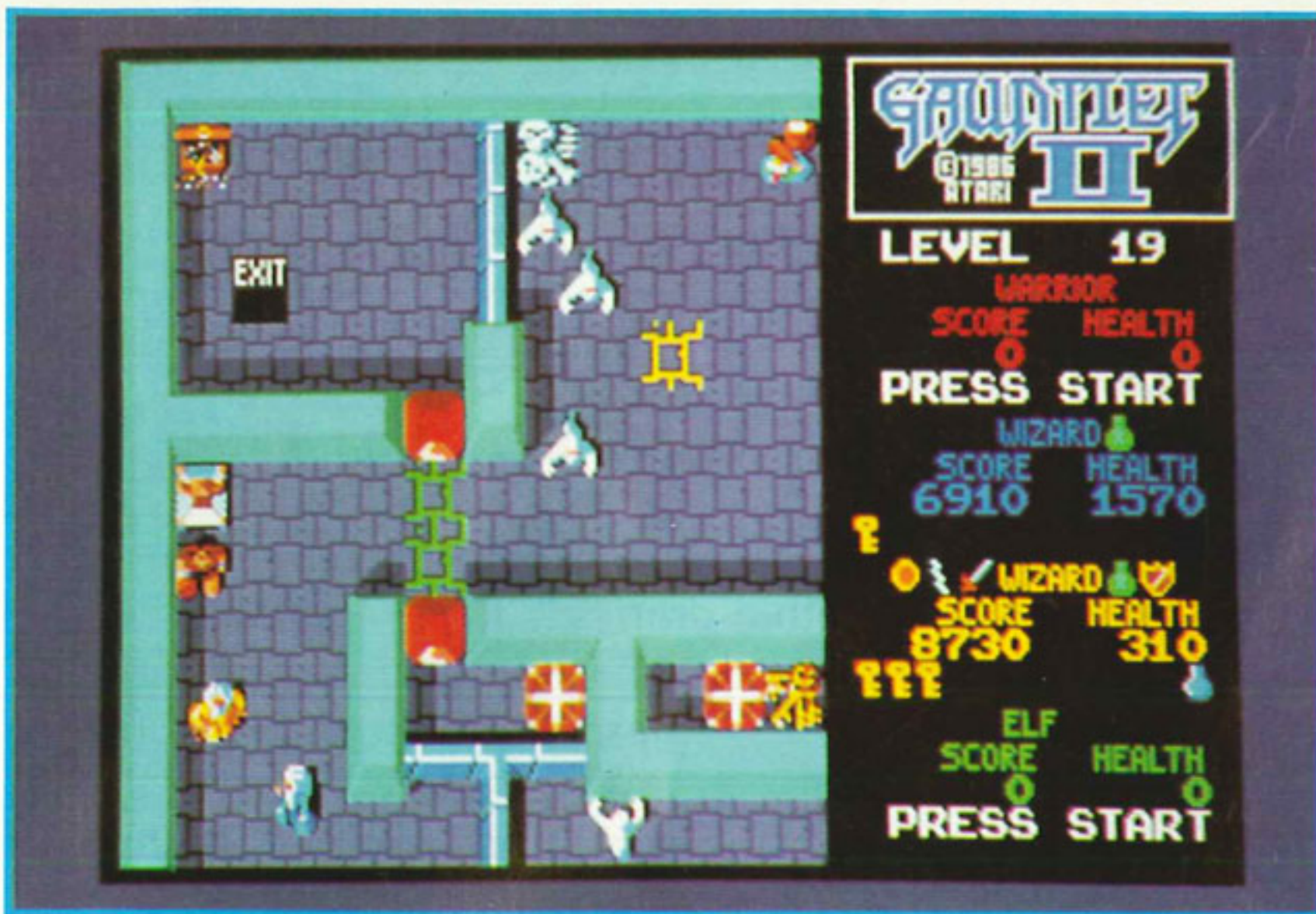


they were aware of the poor Outrun rip-offs available for the ST. 'If they are poor, then they can only increase the interest in the official arcade conversion - you couldn't buy better promotion than that!' Meanwhile, Richard Costello and Kevin Bullmer from Gremlin have completed Gauntlet II and a release date is imminent. With exact scaled-down graphics and outstanding speech synthesis taken from the arcade version, the sequel is likely to rival the success of the original conversion.

By all accounts, U.S. Gold are also experimenting with software. 'Charlie Chaplin is a totally new concept which is currently under development. You are given a budget to direct a Chaplin film. You can choose the characters, scripts and scenery and then direct Charlie's crazy stunts. Then you can replay the film and go to the premier, or reshoot a scene, which is costly.' All of the in-house software companies are working



Charlie Chaplin, their latest and most ambitious development features an all new playing concept

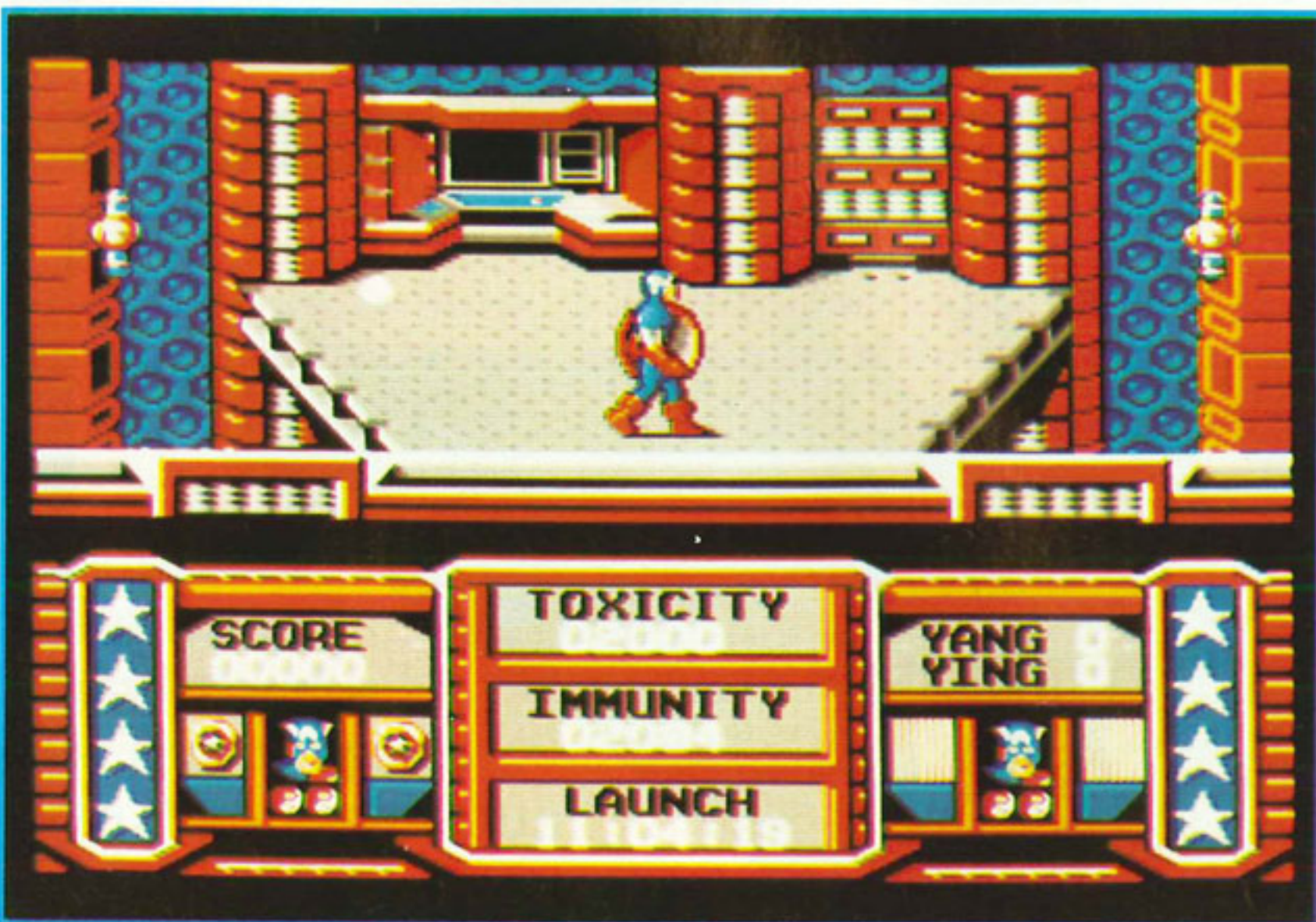


Gauntlet II now complete and almost ready to ship

on projects which are in various stages of development. In addition to Gauntlet II, Gremlin have completed Mickey Mouse, while Ramrod is still a long way from completion. As described, 'Go' are testing Captain America at the moment and have just released Trantor, while the long-awaited release of Outrun on the U.S. Gold label draws nearer. Evidently, the energy and creative flow is showing no signs of flagging! Now, after four years of U.S. Gold licensing the best software that America has to offer, recent developments show a reversal of roles, with Epyx publishing and marketing original U.S. Gold software in the States.

A combination of foresight, planning and energy has made this phenomenal company the most prolific and successful in the industry. U.S. Gold is synonymous with home computer entertainment and, in 1987, they contributed an incredible 30 per

cent of the entire U.K. full-price software market. The group's end-of-year figure in 1987 grossed £37.5 million and nearly half of that sum was accounted for by U.S. Gold. They have a pre-eminent distribution network which reaches from the U.K., France and Germany to Greece and Turkey. What the interview most forcefully illustrated was, that to achieve success and maintain dominance, the quality of the products must be high and consistent. Whether it's Disney characters, film rights or arcade games, they seem to be able to successfully negotiate copyrights and maintain their renowned software quality. There is little doubt that U.S. Gold have made a serious business out of fun and games.



Captain America - one of the first ST releases on the GO! label



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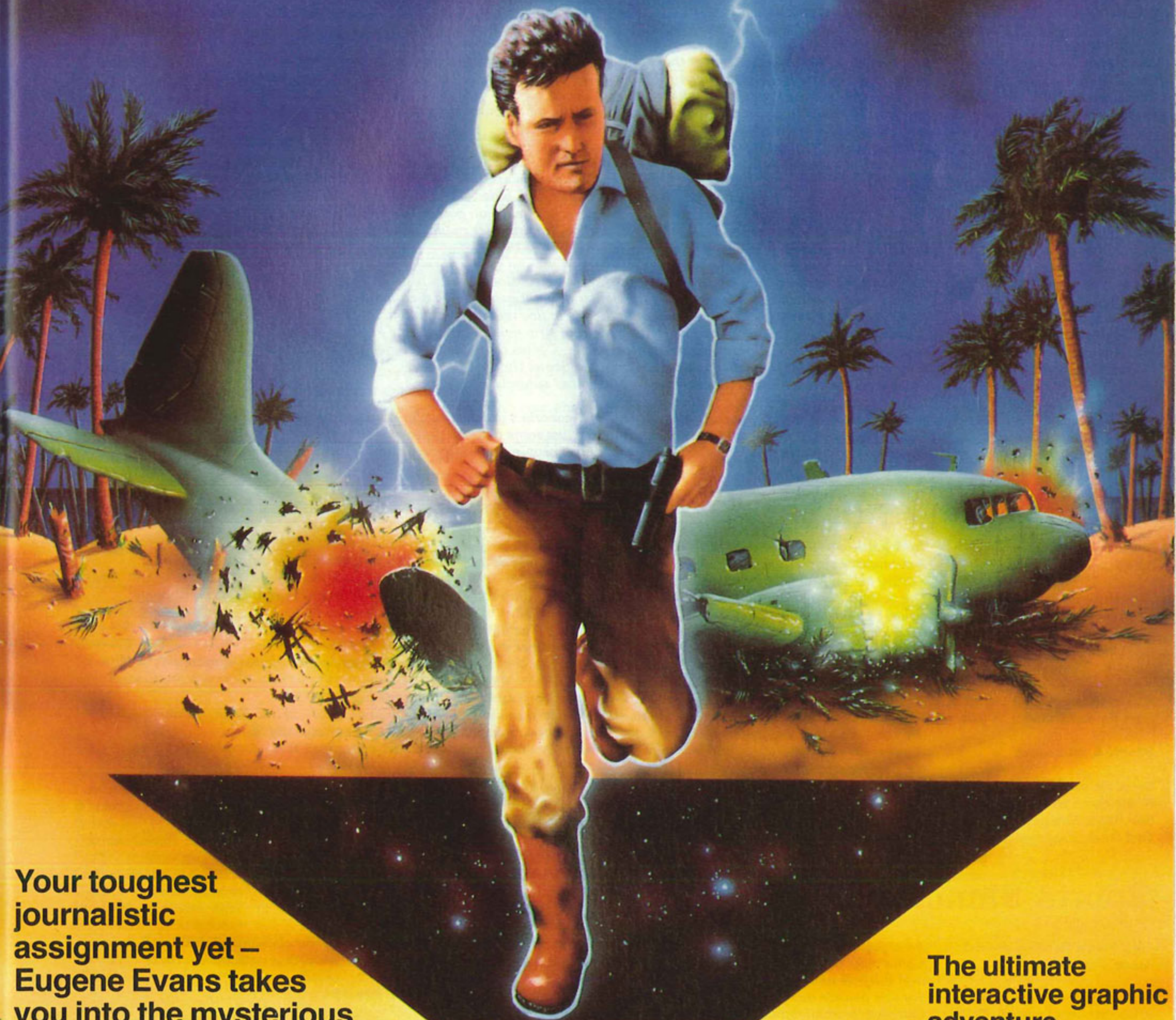
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THE LIST

The second and final part of our look at the hundreds games already available for your Atari ST.

Board, Cards and Strategy Games

- Balance of Power, Mindscape: The emphasis on this game is to prevent a nuclear war rather than start one - a complex strategy game. £29.95
- Breach, Omnitrend: Meticulously thorough combat strategy at platoon level - at this price you could buy your own pocket army! £39.95
- Bridge Player 2000, CP Software: Advance Bridge game with tutor - strictly for the enthusiast. £19.95
- Cards, Microdeal: A collection of the popular card games. £19.95
- Check Mate, Robtek: A competent chess program and, at this price, a good introduction to computer chess. £9.95
- Chess (Psion), Psion: Reputed to be the ultimate chess game. Play on 3D or 2D board. It contains the usual strategy features. £24.95
- Chessmaster 2000, EA: The same features as Psion chess with speech synthesis. £24.95
- Colonial Conquest, Strategic Sim: Historically interesting! See whether you can hold on to the colonies longer than Britain managed to! £29.95
- Eye, Endurance Games: A strategy game based on a little-known board game. £14.95
- Flip Side, Microdeal: A Reversi type game with six levels, plus board edit. £19.95
- Football Manager 1, Addictive: This game was surprisingly popular in the eight-bit market and now has been improved for the ST. £14.95
- Great Battles, Royal Software: Four great battles including Waterloo - strictly for the enthusiast, with an enthusiastic price. £34.95
- Hex, Mark of the Unicorn: Weird strategy game in which wizards compete against each other. £39.95
- Las Vegas, Anco: Without the excitement of winning or losing money, what have you got? Anco's complete casino gambler. £9.95
- Ogre, Origin: War game with elements of tactical armoured warfare. Recent price reduction. £24.95
- Power Play, Arcana: A battle of the gods in a so-called 'ingenious board game'. £19.95
- Red Alert, Antic: Do-it-yourself Strategic Defence Initiative construction set - an excellent retirement present for Mr Reagan!
- Roadwar Europa, Strategic Sims: An arcade and strategy game with the object of saving a continent which is under threat of war. £24.95
- Shanghai, Activision: The only representative of this increasingly popular oriental game called mah-jong - a sort of Yuppie snap! £24.95
- Skyfox, Electronic Arts: A much-hyped futuristic aircraft simulation that fails to live up to its reputation.
- Strip Poker, Anco: 'Donna and Samantha invite you to a sizzling night of strip poker!' Not suitable for children - or adults!
- Techmate Chess, Microdeal: High-level play with a comprehensive problem solver. Comes complete with timer and en passant. £19.95
- Tetris, Mirrorsoft: A simple but enjoyable game of tessellation from the Soviet Union. £19.95
- Trivia Trove, Anco: Includes questions on sport, pop, science and five other subjects. £9.95
- Trivial Pursuits, Domark: A good conversion from board to screen! £19.95
- UMS, Rainbird: A war strategy in which you can recreate some of the world's greatest battles - fantastic graphics. £24.95
- Vegas Gambler, Eidersoft: Poker, Blackjack, Roulette and the slot machine are just some of the ways to lose your money - play it safe! £24.95
- Word for Word, Bay View: Based on Scrabble, this game has 20,000 words. Four people can participate - and, hopefully, chip in to buy it! £39.95

Simulations

- Arctic Fox, Electronic Arts: Tank battle simulator on 3D battlefield. Drop in price. £19.95
- Blue War, Go: A submarine simulation, which is as deep and unfathomable as the watery depths it attempts to emulate - not exactly action packed! £19.95
- F15 Strike Eagle, Microprose: The best military jet simulation available. A variety of exciting combat missions. Although the scrolling is a little jerky, F15 Strike Eagle is an absolute must! £24.95
- Flight Simulator II, Sublogic: Respectable 3D flight sim comprising full flight training. The flying is most realistic - unlike the price £39.95
- GATO, Spectrum Holobyte: The most playable sub simulation with realistic and traditional instrumentation. £29.95
- Gunship, Microprose: A brilliant, thorough, realistic and entertaining helicopter simulation. Microprose have made combat simulations their own and this is their finest! £24.95
- Harrier Strike Mission, Miles: 3D Flight and combat simulation for advanced simulation players - high altitude price. £49.95
- Hunt for Red October, Argus: You guide a Russian nuclear sub to a clandestine rendezvous with the US Navy in order to sell it to them. Although the story is sound, the game suffers from poor controls and lacks entertainment and variety. £24.95
- Shuttle II, Microdeal: Covers launch, orbit, return and landing. This simulation should have been a lot better than it is - complexity chokes the game-play. £24.95
- Silent Service, MicroProse: A graphically appealing and playable sub simulation - if you are going to buy a sub sim, make it this one. £24.95
- Strike Force Harrier, Mirrorsoft: Another military jet simulation which fails to reach the standards set by F15 Strike Eagle. £24.95
- Sub Battle Simulator, Epyx: A German submariner's view of war beneath the waves. Sixty missions await you - a competent simulation. £24.95
- Test Drive, Electronic Arts: This is a driving simulation. It comprises steering and full transmission which are both ingeniously incorporated in the joystick. Sadly, however, this attention to detail is detrimental to the flow of the game. £24.95

Sports Simulations

- 10th Frame Bowling, Access: An enjoyable ten-pin bowling simulation with sampled sound of a small crowd cheering and clapping. £24.95
- Arena, Psygnosis: Game play has been sacrificed for large and realistic characters in this athletics simulation. One noticeable error is that the pole-vaulter has only got half a pole. £24.95
- Arena and Bratuccas pack: For five pounds more you can have Arena and an average graphical adventure. £29.95
- Brian Clough's Football, CDS: Complete football management and strategic field-play. £24.95
- Chamonix Challenge, Infogrames: A climbing simulation that no vertigo sufferer should be without. £19.95
- Champ Basketball, Gamestar: The only basketball game available for the ST. £24.95
- Champ Football, Gamestar: Ground-level view of American Football with sound. Surprising that this is the only Gridiron game on the ST. £24.95
- Champ Waterskiing, Infogrames: Why are there so few watersport simulations? Look no further than this game - very wet! £19.95

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| Electronic Pool, Microdeal: | An enjoyable mouse-controlled pool game in which you position a white marker on the edge of the table, alter the power of the shot, and shoot. £19.95 |
| Hardball, Accolade: | A brilliant baseball game in which you can bat, throw and field. Excellent graphics that switch between panoramic field play and close-up action. A sports simulation which is well worth buying. £24.95 |
| International Karate, Systems 3: | One of the best karate games available on the ST, with world-famous sights and buildings in the background. £19.95 |
| International Soccer, Microdeal: | The only soccer game available for the ST. The players are large and cartoon-like and the action is frantic. £19.95 |
| Karate kid II, Microdeal: | Based on the film, this game is a martial arts tournament against a variety of characters. Intermission screens include catching a fly with chopsticks and eating it. £24.95 |
| Leader Board, Access: | The best golf simulation available! Comprehensive control of shots with the mouse. £24.95 |
| Mean Eighteen, Accolade: | A complex and not particularly enjoyable golf simulation with course construction set. £24.95 |
| Micro League Wrestle, MicroProse: | This game is made up of still digitized pictures. You have no control over the wrestlers but select a move or hold from a list at the side of the screen and watch to see whether it is successful - original but boring. £19.95 |
| Q Ball, English Software: | A weird variation on pool with a three-dimensional rotating table in space - I prefer the traditional format. £19.95 |
| ST Karate, Eldersoft: | This was the first karate game for the ST which is still one of the most enjoyable. £14.95 |
| Pool & Shuffleboard, Microdeal: | The shuffleboard option is very original and enjoyable. However, the pool game has awkward cue control. £19.95 |
| Super Tennis, Filesixty: | The only tennis game available for the ST - loses its appeal after Wimbledon fortnight. £24.95 |
| Tee Up, Anco: | This is the worst golf simulation available. Comprising an overhead view of a golf course, it has little appeal. £14.95 |
| Winter Olympiad 88, Tynesoft: | A thoroughly enjoyable winter sports simulation. This is the best multi-player participation game that I have played in recent months! £19.95 |

Adventures - Graphic/Role Playing

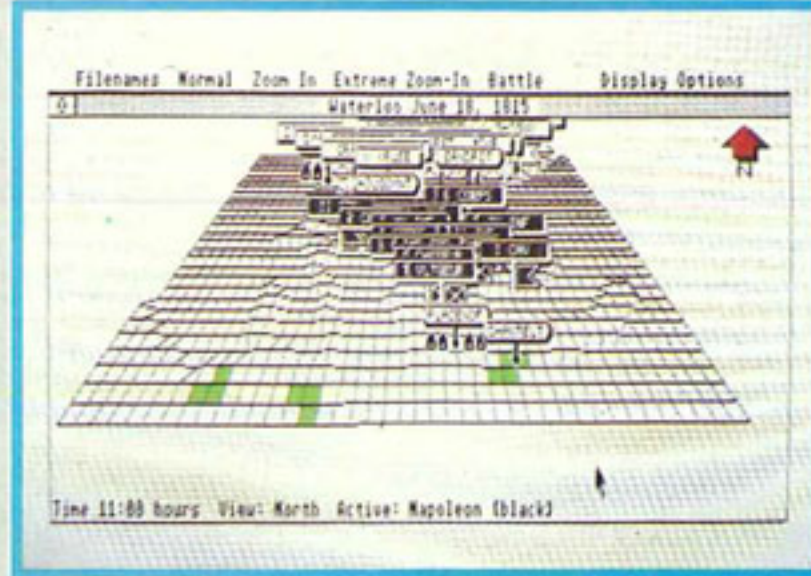
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| 221 Baker Street, Datasoft: | 'Cluedo' graphical detective game. You must choose a case and direct Holmes or Watson around the streets of London - moderately entertaining. £24.95 |
| Alternate Reality, Datasoft: | A role-playing fantasy game which will appeal to role-playing fans and nobody else. £24.95 |
| Autoduel, Origin: | An adventure in which you prepare a strange vehicle for battle - you get little mileage out of it. £24.95 |
| Black Cauldron, Sierra On Line: | A children's graphic adventure with animation - you'd better start saving your pocket money. £29.95 |
| Defender of Crown, Mindscape: | A graphical extravaganza, comprising jousting and sieging castles. This is a real quest with the greatest graphics I have ever seen. £29.95 |
| Deja vu, Mindscape: | Solve a murder to discover your identity before amnesia sets in - I've forgotten what happens after that! £24.95 |
| Dungeon Master, Mirrorsoft: | A dungeons and dragons adventure which is recognized as the greatest graphic adventure for the ST. £24.95 |
| Eden Blues, Infogrames: | You must escape from prison to start this game, which is a task that proves to be as difficult as it sounds - a rather drawn-out saga. £19.95 |
| Frost Byte, Tynesoft: | You are chased by a Cyclops through 50 screens in a typical platform-and-ladder game with some text. £14.95 |
| Golden Path, Firebird: | Help a monk along the golden path to peace and tranquillity. The game-play varies between reading old scrolls and participating in honourable combat - slow-moving but graphically appealing. £19.95 |
| King's Quest (3 Pack), Sierra: | Compilation of the amusing and challenging quest series - a wicked sense of humour runs through the series. £24.95 |
| L' Affaire, Infogrames: | An adult adventure which takes you through seven European cities - contains sexual overtones! £19.95 |
| Not a Penny More..., Domark: | A role-playing adventure based on the book by Jeffrey Archer - like the book, it has received mixed reviews. £19.95 |
| Passengers, Infogrames: | An original but disagreeable adventure based on a baroque tale of love, peril and adventure - the story-line and dialogue is rather disjointed! £19.95 |
| Passengers II, Infogrames: | It must have been popular though! £19.95 |
| Pirates, Cascade: | Not a great deal of swashbuckling in this one. The cannon-loading procedure is so long-winded that you end up avoiding battles at all costs. £12.95 |
| Rings of Zilfin, Strategic Sim: | An animated adventure with evils to be conquered by the joining of rings. £24.95 |
| Roadwar 2000, Strategic Sim: | Foreboding role-playing tale set in post-holocaust America - guaranteed horrors! £24.95 |
| Rogue, Epyx: | Yet another animated, multi-level, dungeon adventure. But, which one do you choose? Not this one! £24.95 |
| Sapiens, Loriciels: | An interesting graphical adventure of Man's evolution. Well-designed screens and controls are complemented by pleasing graphics and sound. £19.95 |
| S.D.I., Mindscape: | One of their 'movie' series with outstanding graphics. This is a space combat and strategy game with romance as an underlying theme. £29.95 |
| Sentinel, Firebird: | A completely baffling strategy set in a forbidding landscape - the game is as unyielding as the terrain. £19.95 |
| Sidewalk, Infogrames: | The most amusing adventure that I have ever played. The character must find the pieces to his motorbike and go to a concert. Hilarious dialogue, outrageous characters and an original concept. £19.95 |
| Slaygon, Microdeal: | A massive maze game which, because of its complexity, misses being in the arcade section. £19.95 |
| Space Quest, Sierra On Line: | Having run out of stories in the King's Quest series, Sierra have gone 'Outer Space'. On a spaceship full of dead crew members, you must direct a character to find the cause of the massacre. £24.95 |
| Star Trek, Firebird: | A long-awaited and disappointing game taken from the cult space series. Speech synthesis and digitized pictures do little to enhance the game. £19.95 |
| Taipan, Imagine: | A much hyped arcade adventure about pirating and press ganging set in nineteenth century China. Sadly, it failed to live up to expectations. £19.95 |
| Tanglewood, Microdeal: | An advanced and changeable graphic adventure - worth checking out. £19.95 |
| Ultima 2, Sierra on Line: | The second in the cult series of adventures - one of the most prolific role-playing adventures. £24.95 |
| Ultima 3, Exodus Origin: | Real-time fantasy which, surprisingly, has nothing to do with Ultima 2. Billed as 'a new dimension game'. £24.95 |
| Universe 11, Omnitrend: | A space-trading adventure in which, presumably, you must accrue enough money to pay for the game. £69.95 |
| Winnie the Pooh, Sierra On Line: | A charming graphic adventure for children and anyone who is bored with blood and guts. |

Adventures graphic and text

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| Amazon, Telarium: | Volcanoes, jungles and tribes all play a part in this jungle jaunt. £19.95 |
| Bard's Tale, Electronic: | Theatrical text and graphic adventure with a choice of characters. It has received favourable reviews. £24.95 |
| Beyond Zork, Infocom: | The latest in the Zork series - it might be an idea to play Zorks 1, 2 and 3 first! £29.95 |
| Borrowed Time, Activision: | Bogart-style gumshoe adventure. Sam must find an elusive fiend or die - interesting dialogue! £24.95 |
| Crimson Crown, Penguin: | A costume drama on disk! One hundred colourful and detailed screens and a one mega-word vocabulary. £19.95 |
| Forbidden Quest, Priority Soft: | The theme of this adventure is survival on a hostile planet - takes time getting off the ground. £39.95 |
| Gnome Ranger, Level 9: | As the title suggests, this is an amusing adventure about magic and the little people - digitized pictures. £14.95 |
| Guild of Thieves, Rainbird: | The sequel to the Pawn. This is one of the most enjoyable series of adventures available for the ST. £24.95 |
| Hitch Hiker's Guide, Infocom: | Based on the cult television series (text only). £29.95 |
| Hollywood Hijinx, Infocom: | An enjoyable adventure about 'making it' in Hollywood (text only). £29.95 |
| Jewels of Darkness, Level 9: | One of the first dungeon and dragon adventures containing all the usual features - a bit dated! £19.95 |
| Jinxter, Rainbird: | Sparkling humour sets this mischievous tale apart from the rest! £24.95 |
| Mindshadow, Activision: | Escaping from a desert island is just the start of this brilliant adventure. Challenging, absorbing and entertaining, I recommend Mindshadow. £24.95 |
| Moebius, Origin: | This confusing oriental adventure is ideal for the accomplished adventurer - baffling! £24.95 |
| Mortville Manor, Eldersoft: | A spooky adventure set in a manor house. Contains the latest features, including speech synthesis. Graphically appealing, easy to use and very challenging! £24.95 |
| Nine Princes in Amber, Telarium: | A rather stuffy adventure about politics, negotiations and alliances - need I say more? £19.95 |
| Oo-Topos, Polarware: | An adventure as strange as its title. Save the world from a collision with a meteor. £19.95 |

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| The Pawn, Rainbird: | A highly-acclaimed and popular adventure. £24.95 |
| Perry Mason, Telarium: | Adventure based around the popular TV detective. £19.95 |
| Questprobe, Adventure Inc.: | A popular adventure full of unfathomable riddles. £19.95 |
| Silicon Dreams, Rainbird: | A collection of adventures including Snowball, Worm in Paradise and Return to Eden. £19.95 |
| Spiderman, Adventure Inc.: | Based on the 'Marvel' character - not one of the greatest adventures. £19.95 |
| Tass Times, Activision: | A bizarre adventure in alternate reality - for all spaced-out space cadets. £24.95 |
| Transylvania, Penguin: | Graphic adventure based around classic vampire story. £19.95 |
| Treasure Island, Windham: | Based on the classic novel. £39.95 |
| Ultima IV, Origin: | After the Dark Ages, everyone is going on quests. This is a massive graphical adventure containing spells, magic, bloodthirsty battles and characters with strange names. £24.95 |
| Wishbringer, Infocom: | Another alternate reality adventure. £29.95 |
| Zork's 1, 2 and 3, Infocom: | One of the first serialized adventures which gained a cult following some time ago. £29.95 (each). |

As you can probably see, this list is already out of date. In the near future we hope to set up a computerised system that will maintain a constantly updated database of ST games which could, for example, be accessed by modem.



THE LIST



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CODE MASTERS COMPETITION

As part of their launch into the 16-bit market, Code Masters are giving away the first 25 copies of Grand Prix Simulator that arrive in the UK for the ST. A massive hit on all other formats, Grand Prix Simulator is sure to be a winner on the ST. To win one of the first copies available, all you have to do is answer the five easy questions below and pop the entry form in the post to reach the ST Action offices before 22nd June. Mark your entry: 'Code Masters Competition'.

Questions:

- 1) Who wrote the original version of BMX Simulator?
- 2) Whose graphics are on all versions of BMX Simulator?
- 3) How old is Richard Darling?
- 4) How old is David Darling?
- 5) When did Code Masters first start trading?



Answer to Question 1 :

Answer to Question 2 :

Answer to Question 3 :

Answer to Question 4 :

Answer to Question 5 :

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Send entry to:
Code Masters Competition
ST Action,
10 Theatre Lane
Chichester,
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PO19 1SR

GIVING THE GAME AWAY

Hello, once again, and welcome to this, the second hints and tips section. You have been sending in loads of tips, cheats and pokes, so thanks very much and please keep them flowing, along with any maps you may have. You can win £20 worth of software for your troubles. Also, if you have any general enquiries, please write in and ask about anything that annoys you, pleases you or anything you would like to see. Now, on with the tips...

Super Sprint - Electric Dreams

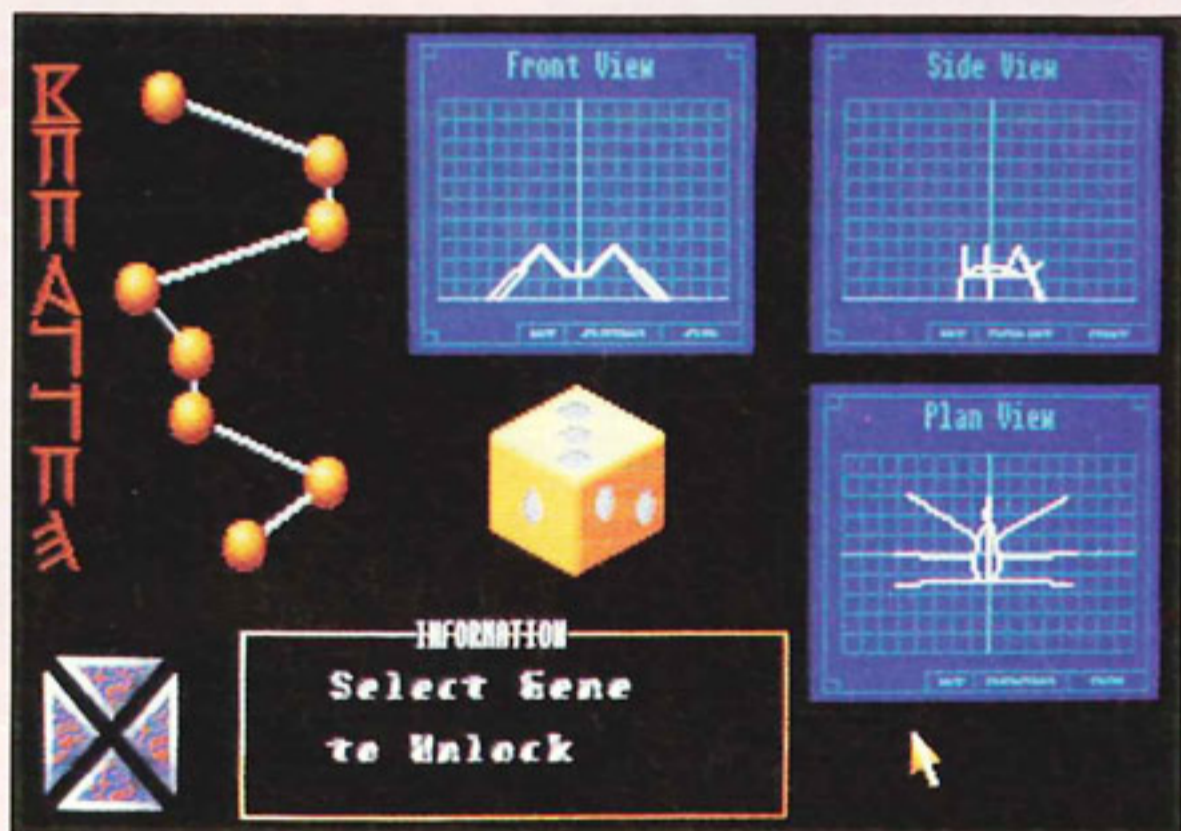
This is one of the better arcade conversions I have seen, and it is every bit as tricky as its arcade parent. If you have managed to struggle onto level eight, then good old Richard Nellist from Stockton-on-Tees has a useful tip to gain you lots of extra points. When you start the race, instead of racing around the track, turn through 180 degrees so you are facing in the opposite direction and move to the left of the starting grid and face your car so its nose is pointing down. As the computer-controlled drone passes you, accelerate so you hit the drone and push it into the bottom wall, then crash into the wall yourself. When you reappear, move up again, get into the same position and destroy the next drone, and the next, and the next, and so on, until there are no drones left. Now as long as you do not finish the race, you can just continue collecting spanners and other point-giving objects to your heart's content!



Ocean's indescribable ECO

I don't really know how to describe this game - I mean, is there such a thing as a gene'em up! Anyway, whilst I wonder about that, here is a tip from Richard Nellist of Stockton-on-Tees in Cleveland:

If you press Control-S whilst playing the game you will enter the gene design screen with another gene unlocked, making evolution slightly easier.



Time Bandit - Microdeal

Another game that is getting on a bit but is still playable now. S. Chohen from Milton Keynes has a useful tip which enables you to start and practise on any level. When starting a game, go to any place and you should see 1A at the bottom of the screen. To start on the level of your choice or to practise, press the up and down cursor keys to select the level. Also, the left and right cursor keys can be used to go to different time zones. This helps immensely in gameplay.

PRIZES, PRIZES, PRIZES

Right, that just about winds it up for now. The lucky software winner is Richard Nellist from Stockton-on-Tees, so give us a ring and let us know what you would like. For next month, I would like to see tips etc. for Captain Blood, Trantor, Obliterator - in fact, anything at all! Thanks a lot, Steve. And remember the top quality tips and cheats will receive £20 worth of games software.

Steve Merrett, Playing Tips (STA), 10 Theatre Lane, Chichester, West Sussex, PO19 1SR

Goldrunner - Microdeal

This shoot'em-up is knocking on a bit now, but it is still one of the top vertical scrollers. If you are stuck on any level, then J. Aldridge of Hermitage in Berkshire has found a method for skipping levels.

When you start a game, press the I key and you will be transported to the bonus round, if you press the U key it will then take you onto the next round.

J. has also sent in the names to all the levels: MAGELLAN, FORTRESS, TRITON 3, STYX, TIRATIAN, EMBALL, FATAYSN, ICLO, NEMESIS, BRELTISLOR, MORTEM, TASSIR, ZYLL, MANDELIST, ZYTHUS, ENGELT.



Dungeon Master playing tips by Mitch

The instant success of Mirrorsoft's latest best seller, DUNGEON MASTER, has brought with it multiple headaches for the staff at the Shoe Lane offices in London. The addictive power of this game, combined with the fiendish puzzles it contains, seems to have created an army of addicts who continually jam the Mirrorsoft phones begging for help with their particular problem. The Product Manager, Simon Knight, confessed that he was spending so long on the phone each day attempting to help desperate players, that he felt ST Action could help by releasing a few hints for the desperate.

The good news for anyone stuck on Level 1 of the dungeon, is that there are only another eleven levels to go and, so far, no-one in Britain has completely solved the game! Or perhaps you know better?

Some useful hints from the Mirrorsoft magician are as follows:

The iron keys which are required to open many of the doors are the same colour as the dungeon floor. Invariably the keys are to be found lying near the door but cunningly camouflaged. To see the keys you must have a brightly burning torch and be standing back from the location.

Many problems can only be solved by moving quickly through or past the obstacle and you will be unable to do this if you are carrying anything. So the message is, 'If you need to move fast - DROP THEM!'

Teleporters are also capable of teleporting objects as well as fighters, so there are occasions when you could teleport something else to help solve your problem.

Having problems opening a locked door? If logic and reason fails, why not try a bit of mindless violence with an axe?

Falling down a pit does not seem the best of moves, but there are occasions when success comes after a fall.

Finally, it is essential to draw scale maps for each level as there is at least one obstacle which is truly impossible to pass, and only a map will show that the location behind the obstacle can be reached by another route.

A further piece of good news for DUNGEON MASTER masochists is that the game's creators will be releasing a further five fiendish levels for the game in the autumn. This add-on will enable you to transfer your existing band of heroes to the new locations or you may use the new character editor to create and draw new heroes for the game.

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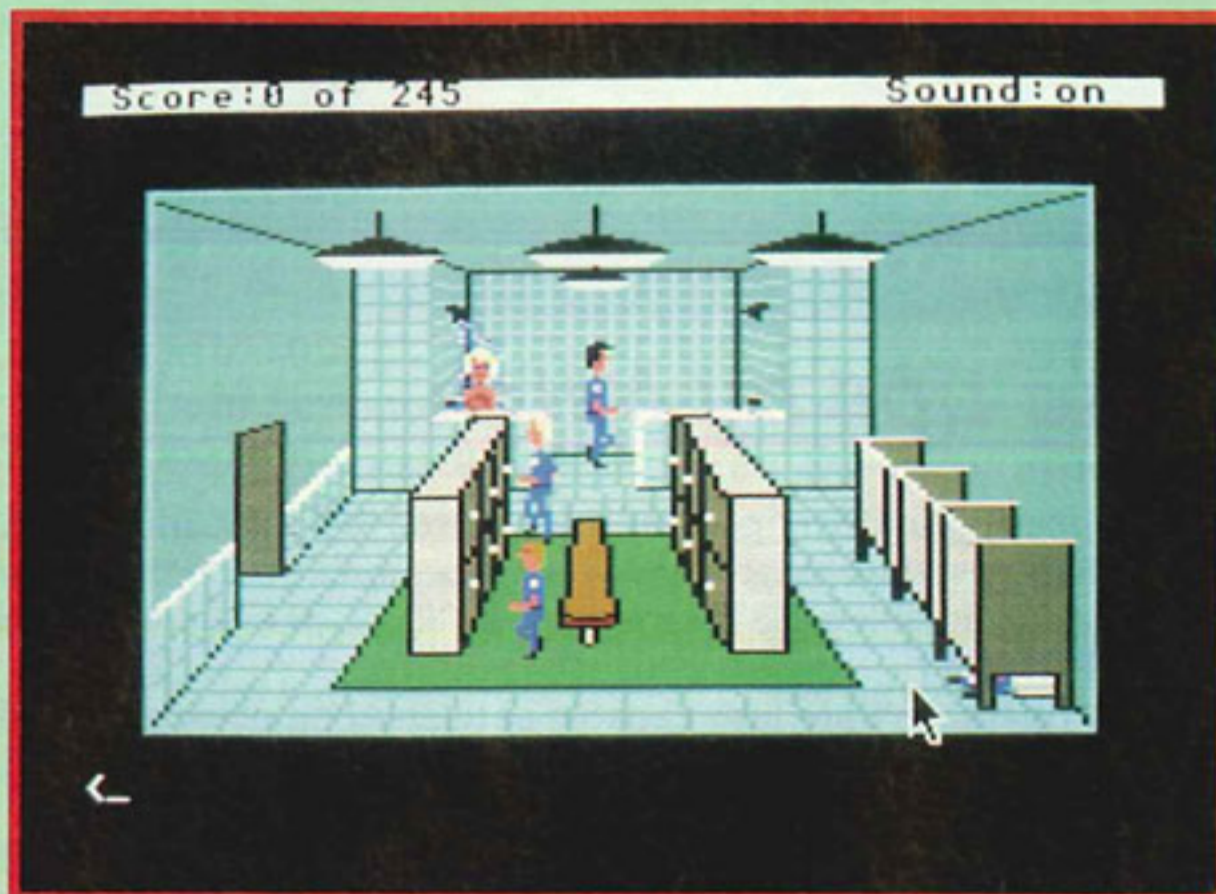
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Barbarian - Palace

This tip will help all you frustrated and decapitated warriors out there. On the one-player game, roll into the middle of the screen and kneel down, then swipe at your opponent's legs. Due to a strange quirk in the program, the other warrior cannot retaliate and you should be able to get to the evil wizard with ease. Thanks go to Norman Tierney from London for that useful tip.



Police Quest - causing problems?

P.S. In your letter, Norman, you wrote asking for help in Police Quest, especially with the bikers in the bar. Well, our resident cocky know-all, Nick Clarkson, has the solution. When you first get out of your police car you must take the PR24 nightstick. Go into the bar and ask the bikers to move. They will get unruly and start to beat you up. Type "use nightstick" and they will leave you alone and move on. Nick also says that if anyone has trouble with any Sierra games, they can write to him via ST Action, and he will do his best to help - he claims to have finished them all.



Nick Clarkson, resident Sierra 'Quest' know-it-all

THE TOTALLY-MEGA INFINITE LIVES POKES SECTION

INCLUDING: GUNSHIP, TNT, EAGLES NEST, PROHIBITION

The routines were written to run in Atari Basic, the Basic supplied with the machine. However, Atari have now started including a new Basic which isn't entirely compatible with the old version.

The main difference as far as these routines are concerned, is that the DEF SEG statement is not supported, which means that if you have the new version of Basic, you should leave out the line with this statement in it (line 80 in all routines, where it is used).

To determine if you have the new Basic or not, load it by double clicking on the Basic.prg file, then enter the desk menu and click on About ST Basic. If you have the latest version it will give a 1987 copyright

message, whereas the old version gave a 1985 copyright message.

To use each of the routines provided, follow the instructions included in the REM statements. If you have any trouble with the routines check your typing very carefully then switch the machine off and try again.

*These stunning pokes were brought to you by Mark Laurence exclusively for **ST Action**.*

```

10  rem Infinite time routine for Prohibition on the Atari St.
20  rem First type in this listing, insert a blank disk and run.
30  rem To play, double click on PLOAD.PRG then when the disk stops
40  rem insert Prohibition disk and press a key.
50  rem Program should now load with Infinite time.
70  rem *****
80  def seg=0:rem remove this line if using new basic
90  for n=&h7fd00 to &h7fd75 step 2
100 read a:poke n,a
110 next n
120 bsave "pload.prg",&h7fd00,117
130 data &h601a,&h0000,&h0058,&h0000,&h0000,&h0000,&h0000,&h0000
140 data &h0000,&h0000,&h0000,&h0000,&h0000,&hffff,&h4ffa,&h00fe
150 data &h2f3c,&h0000,&h0200,&h487a,&hfef4,&h2f3c,&h004a,&h0000
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170 data &h004e,&h4e41,&h487a,&h002b,&h487a,&h0027,&h487a,&h0016
180 data &h2f3c,&h004b,&h0003,&h4e41,&h2e40,&h426f,&h090e,&h2f00
190 data &h4eef,&h0104,&h7072,&h6f68,&h6962,&h2e70,&h7267,&h0000
200 data &h2a2e,&h2a00,&h0000

```

```

10  REM THIS PROGRAM ALLOWS YOU TO ALTER THE HIGH SCORES FOR PROHIBTION.
20  REM TO ALTER THE SCORES TYPE IN THIS PROGRAM AND THEN ALTER THE
30  REM DATA STATEMENTS TO YOUR TASTE.
40  REM WHEN YOU HAVE DONE THIS INSERT THE PROHIBTION DISK AND RUN
50  REM THIS PROGRAM.
60  DEF SEG =0:REM REMOVE THIS IF USING NEW BASIC
70  FOR N=0 TO 56 STEP 8
80  READ A,A$
90  POKE &H70000+N,A/10
100 FOR P=1 TO 5 STEP 2
110 A=(ASC(MID$(A$,P,1)))*256+(ASC(MID$(A$,P+1,1)))
120 POKE &H70001+N+P,A
130 NEXT P
140 NEXT N
150 BSAVE "SCORE",&H70000,64
160 REM TO PLACE YOUR OWN NAME AND SCORE IN THE HIGH SCORE TABLE MODIFY
170 REM THE DATA STATEMENTS BELOW.THE FORMAT OF THE LINE IS SCORE,NAME.
180 REM THE MAXIMUM SCORE POSSIBLE IS 655350 AND THE NAME MUST BE SIX
190 REM CHARACTERS.
200 REM LINE 220 GIVES SOMEONE CALLED ACTION A SCORE OF 90000
210 DATA 100000," ST "
220 DATA 90000,"ACTION"
230 DATA 80000," ST "
240 DATA 70000,"ACTION"
250 DATA 30000," ST "
260 DATA 20000,"ACTION"
270 DATA 15000," ST "
280 DATA 10000,"ACTION"

```

```

10  rem switch off buffer graphics from Run Menu
20  rem (Enter Run menu and click on Buf Graphics to remove tick)
30  rem type in this program and insert tnt disk
40  rem run program to give infinite lives.
50  rem ***** WARNING this program alters the disk *****
60  bload "a:tnt.prg",&h5a7d0
70  def seg=0:rem remove this if using new basic
80  poke &h5c26a,0:rem infinite lives
90  poke &h5c556,&hff:poke &h5c562,&hfe
100 rem above pokes switch input ports so player 1 uses port 1
110 rem and player 2 uses port 0:(saves unplugging mouse)
120 bsave "a:tnt.prg",&h5a7d0,51558

```

```

10 rem switch off buffer graphics from Run Menu
15 rem (Enter Run Menu and click on Buf Graphics to remove tick)
20 rem type in this program and insert eagle's nest disk
30 rem run program.
40 rem **** WARNING this program alters the disk ****
60 blood "a:auto\en.prg",&h76fe4
70 def seg=0:rem delete this if using new basic
80 poke &h77342,&h73f4
90 poke &h76fe8,&h410
100 for n=&h773f4 to &h7740a step 2
110 read b
120 poke n,b
130 next n
140 data &h4239,&h0007,&h14df
150 rem above gives infinite bullets
160 data &h4239,&h0007,&h32f3
170 rem above gives infinite hits
180 data &h4239,&h0007,&h2aab
190 rem above gives infinite keys ( must pick one up though )
200 data &h4ef9,&h0007,&h0000
210 bsave "auto\en.prg",&h76fe4,&h480

```

```

10 \ *****
20 \ This routine gives you infinite weaponry and makes your helicopter
30 \ indestructable.To use it switch off the buffer graphics,by clicking
40 \ on Buf Graphics from the Run Menu,and then type in this listing.
50 \ Having done this insert Gunship disk B and RUN.
60 \ Now run the game as usual.
70 \ It is best to make a back up copy of the file Game.exe first so if
80 \ you want to play the game without the cheats you can copy this back
90 \ onto the Gunship disk and do so.
100 \ *****
110 ladd=&h50000:blood "game.exe",ladd
120 def seg=0:rem delete if using new basic
130 poke ladd+9886,&h4e71:' infinite weapons
140 poke ladd+6448,0:poke ladd+9494,0
150 poke ladd+10290,&h4e71:poke ladd+10408,0
160 \ above makes heilcopter indestructable
170 poke ladd+5334,&h4e71:poke ladd+5374,&h4e71
180 \ above gives infinite fuel
190 bsave "game.exe",ladd,86173

```



GUNSHIP

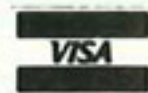
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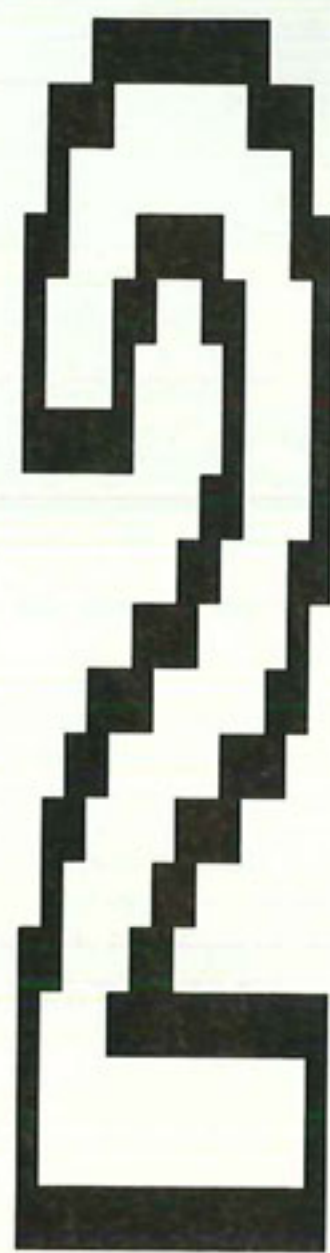


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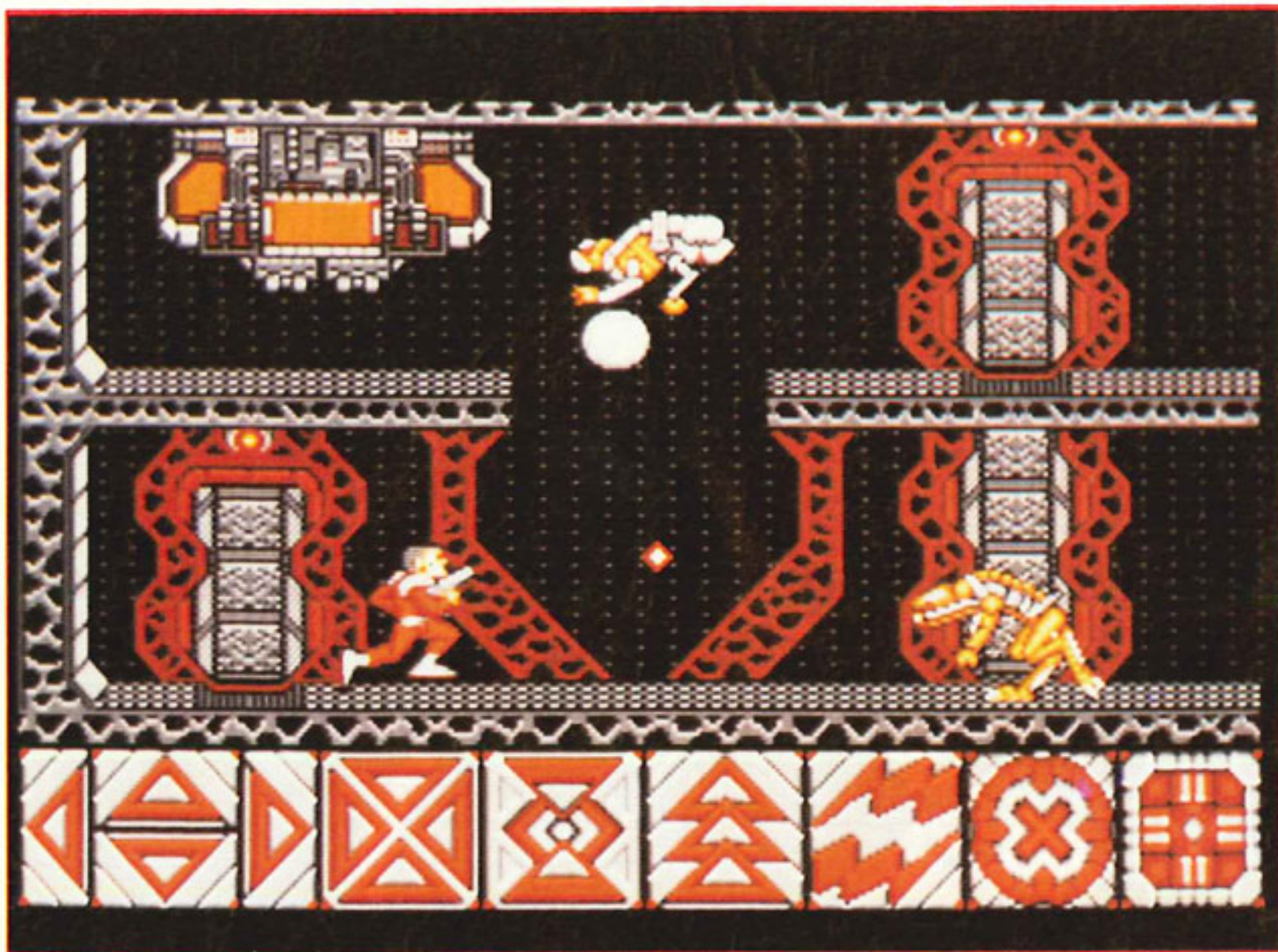
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DEALER AND OVERSEAS ORDERS FOR ATARI SOFTWARE INVITED



Trouble from all angles - a monster moves in from the right while overhead, another takes aim. Below the playing area are the control icons.

With its many elevators and all-action character, *Obliterator* bears more than a passing resemblance to my favourite game, *Impossible Mission*. Psygnosis have come up with, perhaps, the most graphically exciting game available on the ST. However, although there are a number of alternatives for controlling the game, direct and responsive joystick control would most certainly have enhanced the game-play. Nevertheless, after initial confusion with the controls, *Obliterator* induces real involvement with its large and bold graphics and long-term exciting game-play.

JS

OBLITERATOR

PSYGNOSIS (£24.95)

"Like all Psygnosis software, Obliterator is immediately recognizable by the inimitable artwork on both the packaging and the screen. Their aim has always been to present large and life-like characters but, until now, it has been at the expense of game-play."

However, these endeavours have finally paid dividends with controllable game-play and large characterization in this, their latest release since the explosive *Terrorpods*. A graphical interpretation of the stunning artwork on the packaging, followed by a picture of our hero, Drak, continues during the double-disk loading ceremony. The game occupies the entire screen and Drak is positioned in a different location at the start of each new game. Drak is the last of the obliterated and you are in control of a last-ditch attempt to infiltrate the alien battle cruiser and render the vessel useless.

The joystick controls are not recommended by Psygnosis, while the

mouse offers a choice of two ways of controlling the game. A cursor on the screen can be moved to the left or right of Drak's position and clicking the left-hand button sends him running in the corresponding direction. The

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alternative and less effective method is to place the cursor on a four-arrowed direction icon and click on the desired arrow. Additionally, if you are using the more preferable controls, there are four other icons which are essential to the game. Clicking on 'Action' makes Drak perform a function, for instance, to pick up an object, while 'Defend' activates an impressive Judo roll. 'Jump' is self-explanatory, but selecting 'Into' enables Drak to enter an elevator or doorway at the next available opportunity. Pressing the space-bar replaces the icon display with a weapons inventory, a status display and vacant space for five components which must all be col-

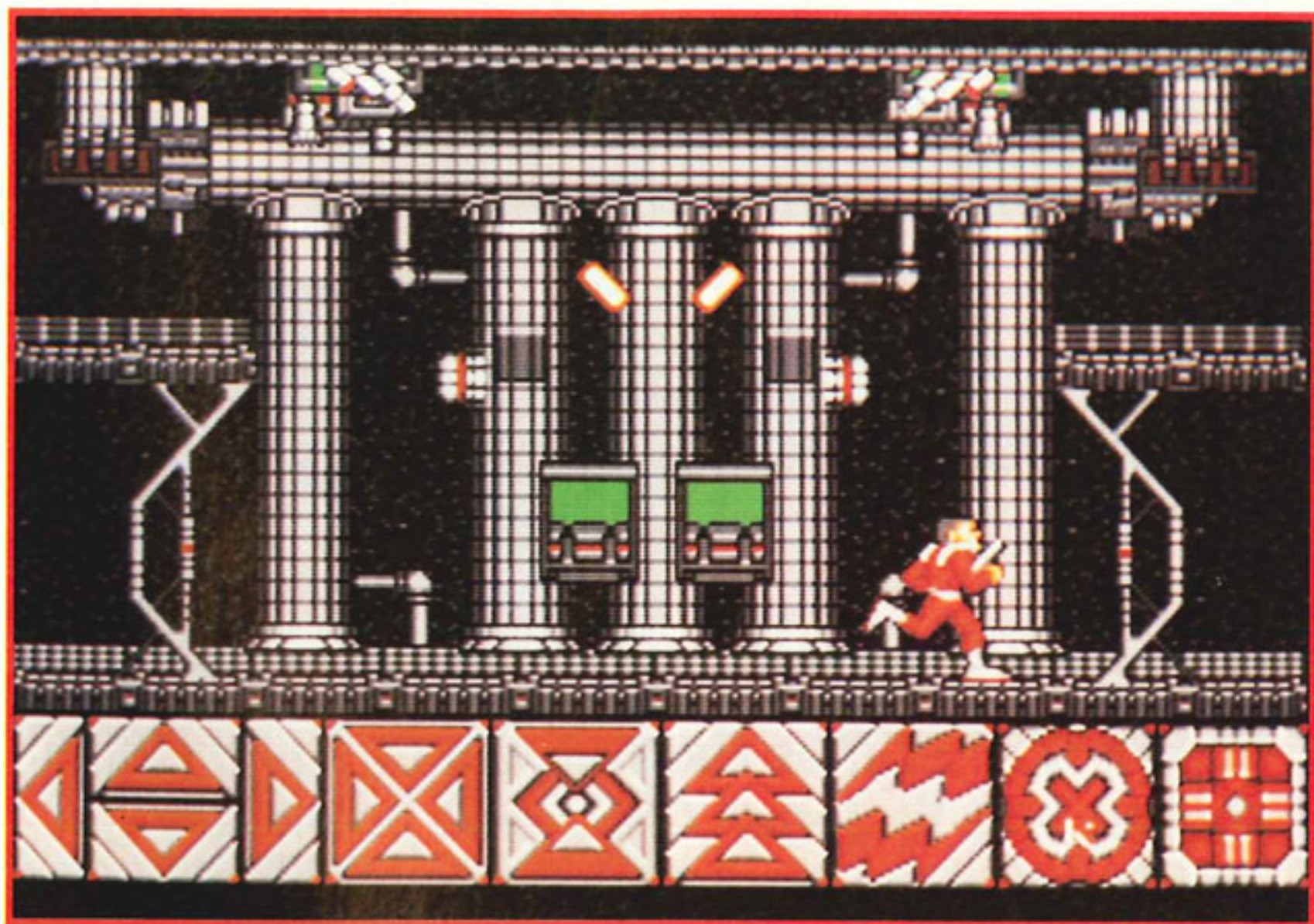
lected. Possession of each of these components disables the ship's engine, weaponry, shield-defence, the escape shuttle and the alien ship's computer.

Drak begins the game with a single-shot pistol and a limited supply of ammunition, but the weaponry can be considerably increased by locating and picking up one of three more powerful firearms which are scattered throughout the ship. Again, extra ammunition can be found to replenish the particular weapon that Drak is using. Without the aid of a blue-print of the vessel, it is best to make a note of one of the features in each location so that you do not waste time searching a room again. Drak materializes in the rear of the vessel and is immediately confronted by an alien guard. As described, moving the cursor in front of Drak and clicking



the left-hand mouse button sends him running in the corresponding direction. Then, moving the cursor down to the 'Into' icon and clicking the left-hand mouse button enables Drak to enter the next door or elevator. Positioned in front of the door, Drak traverses into an adjacent room. However, you have no control over which way the elevator will travel, but you can see Drak moving up and down the open elevator shaft.

On reaching his destination, Drak steps out of the elevator and is invariably confronted by an alien force. Some of these variform aliens hover near the ceiling on space scooters while strange ground vehicles stalk across ground; all of them fire projectiles at Drak with disturbing speed and accuracy. Other rooms, however, contain automated security systems which fire missiles and occasionally eject an amoeba which can even follow Drak back into the



More passageways, more lifts, more spectacular scenery and more meanies shooting at you! - This time it's two guns firing from the ceiling

elevator. When Drak sustains continuous direct hits, he performs a dramatic dying sequence, but once you have mastered the aiming, his effective weaponry should afford adequate protection. Pressing the right button puts him into a weapon-firing stance and the gun can be pointed at any angle. Once you have obtained the correct angle, simultaneously pressing the left button fires the weapon.

More powerful weaponry should be found as soon as possible. These include a rifle, which is more powerful and the projectiles travel further, while the so-called blaster is slow but devastating. The bazooka, however, is the only weapon on the ship that can penetrate metal and, for this reason, it is the most difficult to find. In the interim period, the pistol can be replenished with ammunition, which is

represented by a single cartridge. Both the weaponry and ammunition and the ship's components are picked up by moving Drak near the object and bringing the cursor down to the 'Action' icon, which makes him kneel and retrieve the object. Drak is protected by an energy shield which affords him some protection from less powerful alien weaponry. There are, however, Shield Regenerators throughout the vessel which, when entered, reinforce his protection. As time begins to run out, the border of the screen changes colour, indicating that the federation attack is imminent! All of the components must be found before you can locate and activate the escape shuttle!

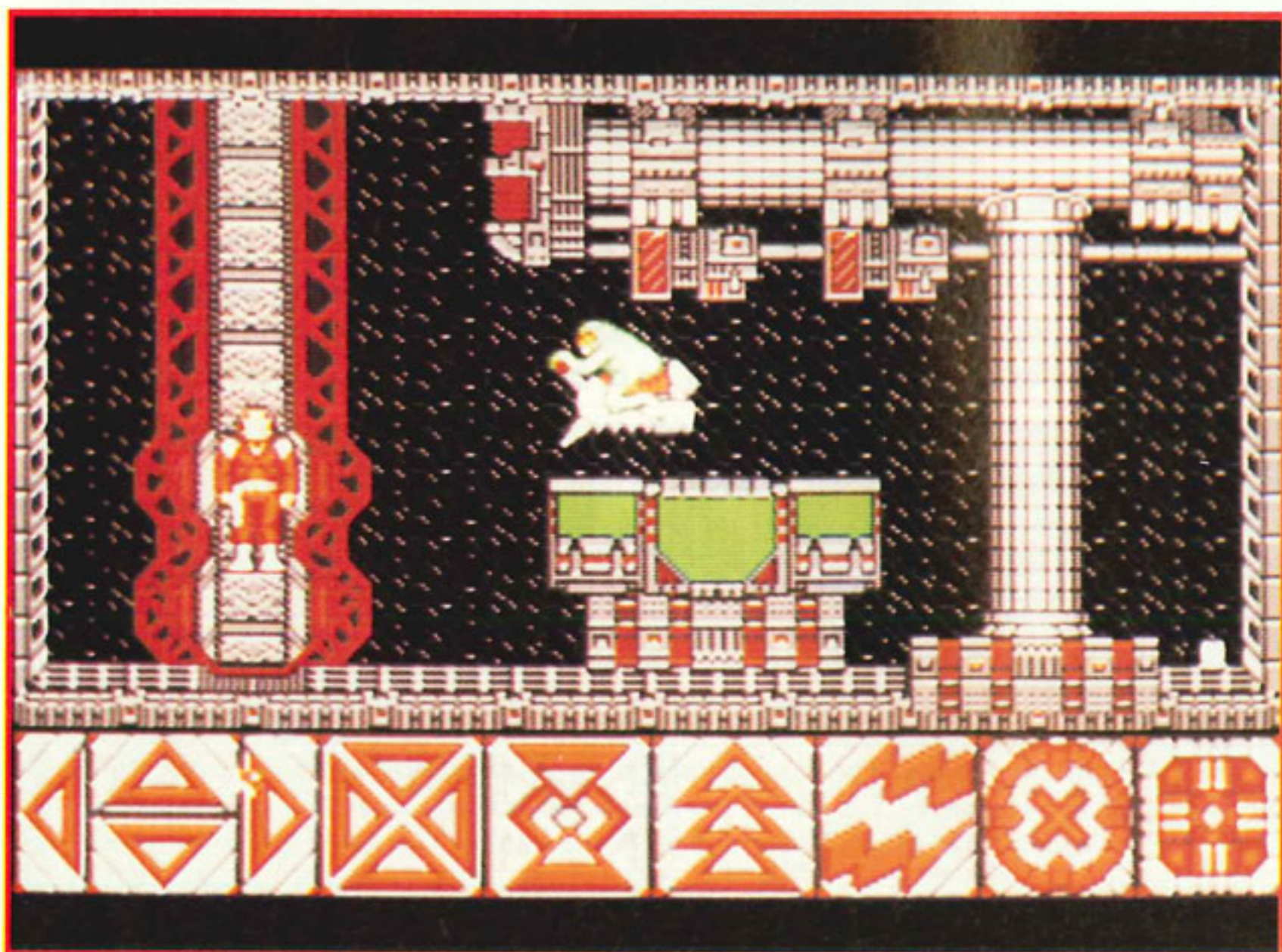
STA

STA
Rating
59%

GRAPHICS: 71%
SOUND: 58%

ORIGINALITY: 47%
ADDICTIVENESS: 53%

DIFFICULTY: AVE-HARD
1ST DAY SCORE: N/A



You move around the space-complex using a series of lifts and walkways. There is never a guard or robot far away, so always be on your toes when entering a new room

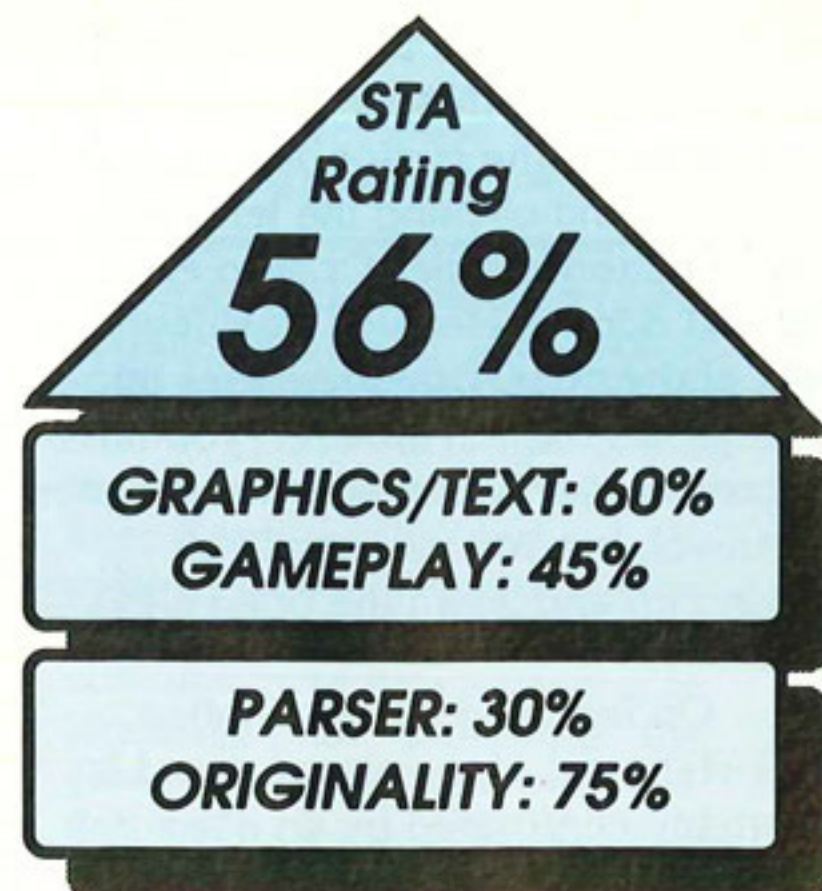
Oh dear! Psygnosis must be running out of ideas, because this looks just like 'Barbarian' in space.

Loading, sports typically classy Roger Dean sequences and the game itself has very nice graphics with the metallic bas-relief backgrounds deserving a special mention. Animation is good, but when Drak gets stunned it tends to go on too long and soon gets monotonous. The burst scrolling is annoying and I would have preferred it to have been flip screen if full scrolling were not possible. For once, the music actually complements the game, adding atmosphere and making up for the minimal sound effects.

The gameplay is very 'Barbarianesque' and thus this game will appeal to anyone who enjoyed Hegor's quest and wants something similar to get his teeth into.

SM

CRASH GARRETT



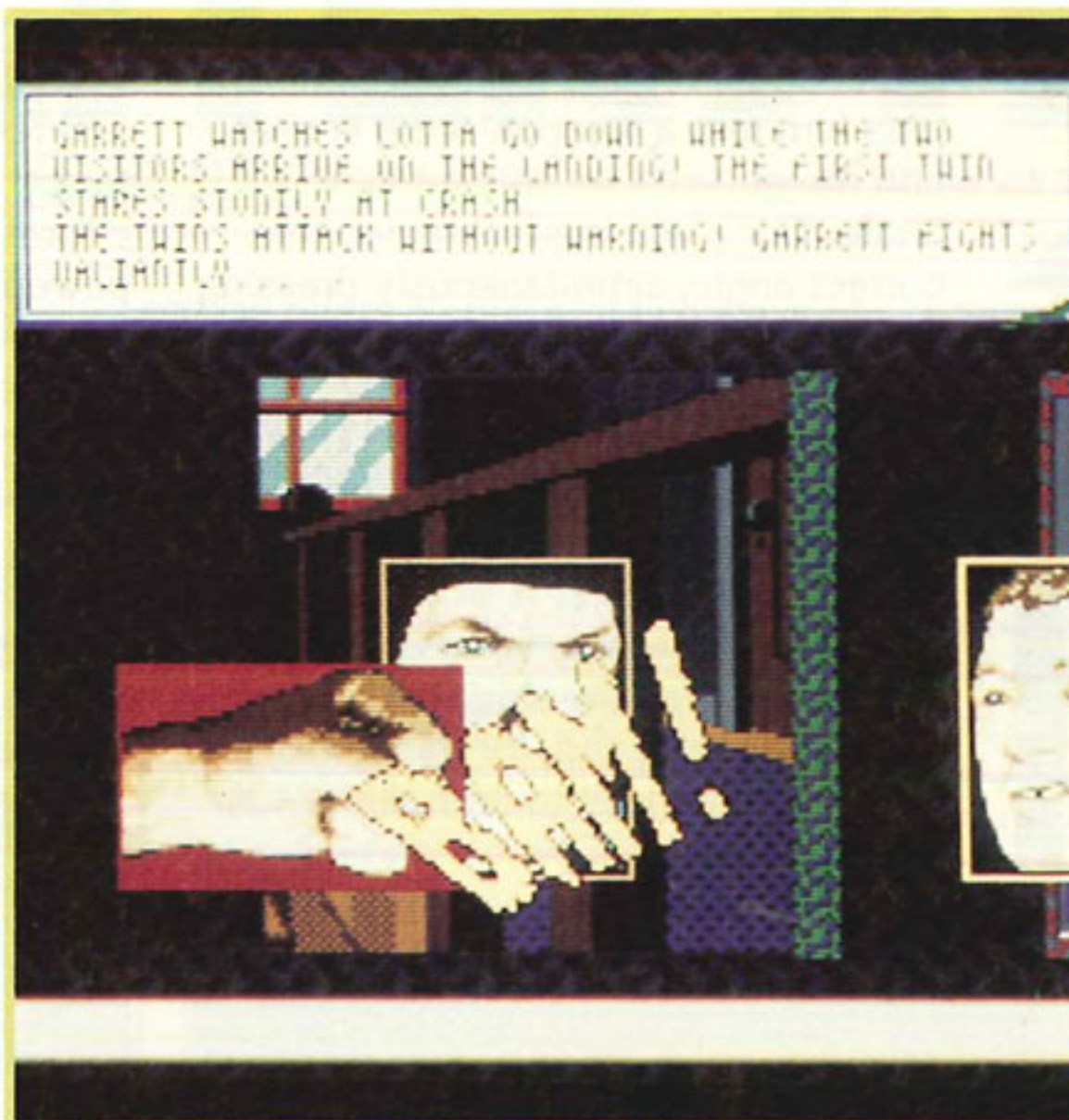
INFOGRAMES (£19.95)

"Crash Garrett flies East. Or should it be Crash Garrett flies undone? Crash has flown straight out of a kid's comic and is set to save us all with one mighty leap."

Steely-grey eyes, a square jaw and solid muscle from ear to ear. The whole ensemble is topped off with a leather flying helmet which appears to be nailed to his skull. The story-line concerns the efforts of our all-American hero to rescue two hard-bitten independent dames from Hitler's evil henchman Von Krull and his Nazi nurse Helga. This Boy's Own plot involves much flying to and forth between Hollywood and the sinister clinic run by the Hitlerites. The bad guys also include a 'heavy' called Mongrel and a sinister arab who has a strange tattoo. The scene opens with Garrett flying a sharp-tongued female journalist to the clinic in search of a scoop. It doesn't take our hero long to lose the girl and be ordered off the premises by the bully-boys. You could stay and fight, or perhaps your best bet is to return to Hollywood where Glory, your gorgeous girlfriend, is anxiously awaiting your return.

The game is shown as a series

of comic-strip scenes complete with head shots of the characters mouthing the bubbles of text which emit from their individual windows. As the



characters move in and out of the action, their window folds, fades, twists and turns like something from the Kenny Everett Video Show. The effect is slick and professional and brings an

interesting slant to what is really an electronic novel rather than an adventure. Should you decide to attack any passing bad guy with fist or weapon, you will be treated to extra windows containing the appropriate limbs floating onto the scene and delivering the medicine. When the action starts, the scene is also overwritten with large 'ZAP', 'BLAT' and 'POW' words resembling scenes from the TV Batman shows.

At strategic moments in the plot, Garrett will ask for your help in making his next move. Depending on your choices there are several ways in which the game plot could evolve before you reach the final showdown with the evil duo. In response to your decisions the game tends to select autopilot mode for some time and you are left to watch the resulting action as the characters react and move on and off stage. Should you make a suggestion Garrett doesn't think is suitable, his mouth will droop and he will say something scathing regarding your idea.

Being a 'real' man, Garrett has an eye for the ladies and he doesn't just look! At the drop of anything he is liable to forget his Scout's honour and indulge in a spot of all-in wrestling with anyone who

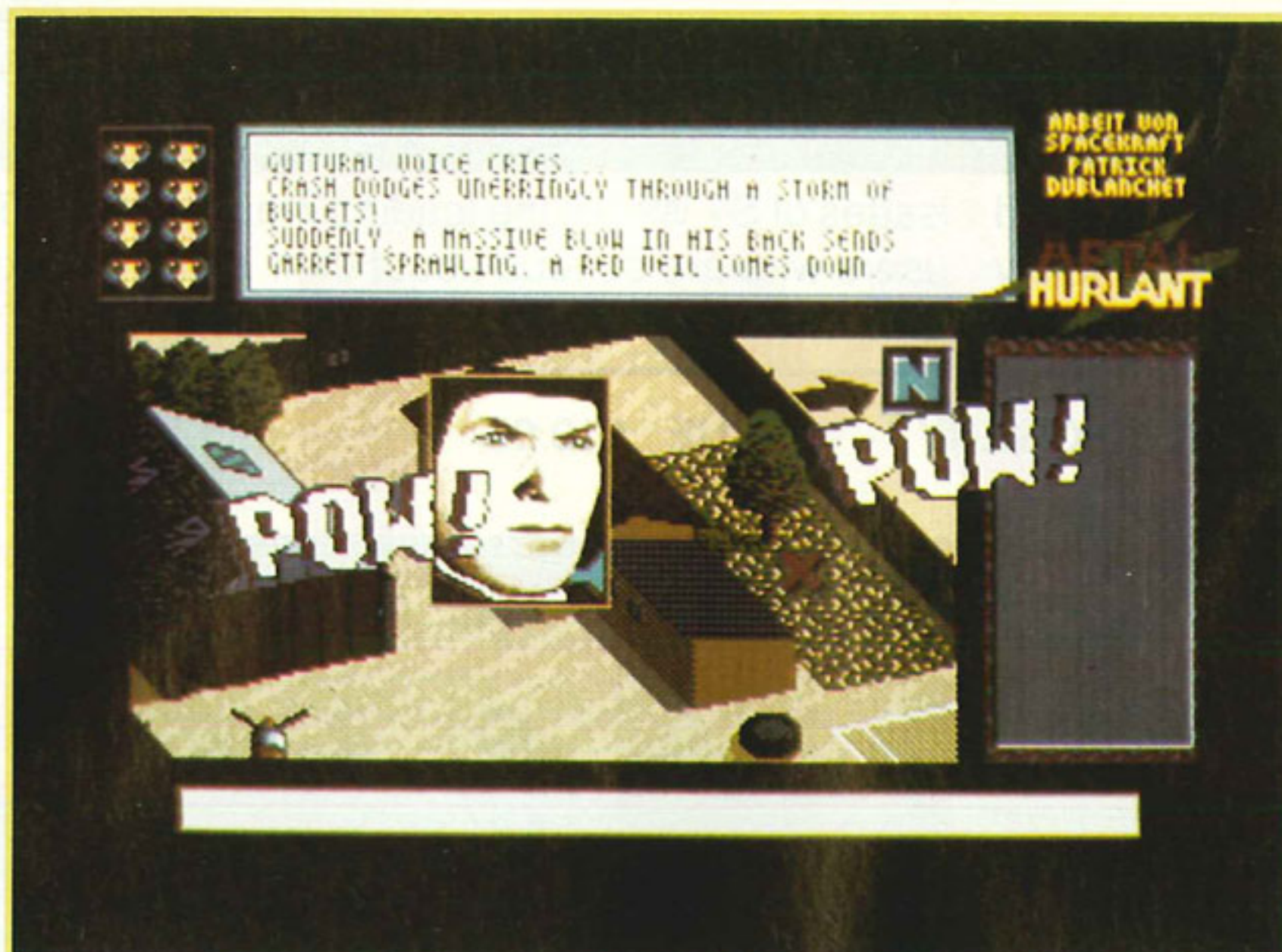
Hmm! What can I say about this game? Well, how about 'nice try'. In order to end on a good note I'll leave the features that I like to the end. First, the bad news.

The game is playable on a TV - just. Having said that, there is one location where the text is very hard to read and you do need to be able to read it. The command parser also leaves something to be desired: at one point I asked it to pick up an earring I'd found. Would it? - No. Instead, I had to use the syntax, 'take it'.

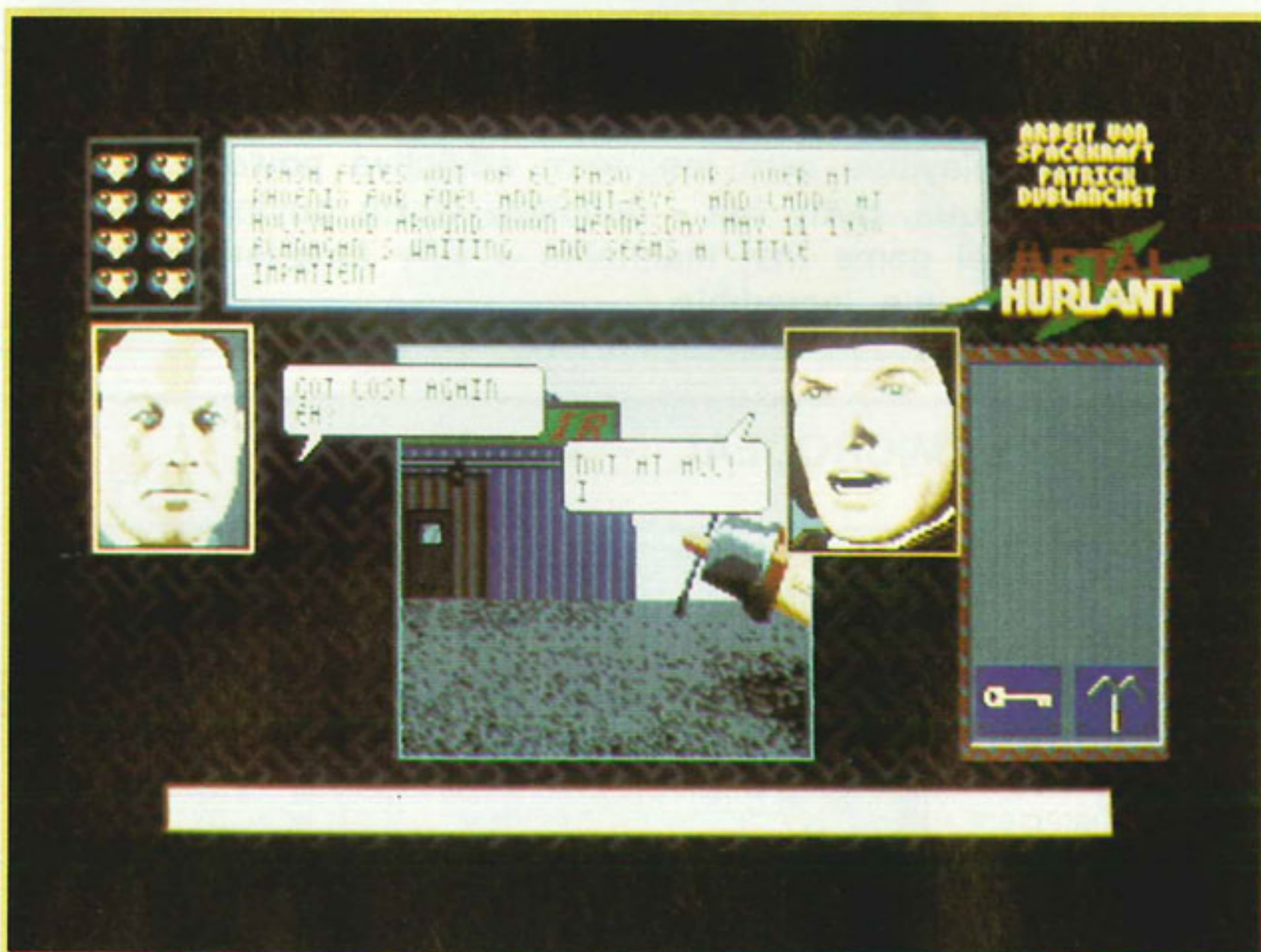
I also disliked the fact that the logic behind the actions you have to take seems to be missing, but it could be that I didn't properly understand the story-line and the information given.

Now the good news! I liked the animated comic-strip-type format, although on occasion the time between command entries seemed a bit long. The graphics I thought were very good. The smooth scrolling of character portraits over the background scene was very impressive. Having completed the game, I confess I used a crib sheet. The last bit of text implies that there is going to be a sequel. If that's the case, I suggest that they tighten up the logic behind the story and put more effort into the command parser.

SJK



Garrett takes a blow to the head as he snoops around an aircraft hangar



Garrett lands for gas and a rest. He meets Flanagan, his mechanic, who cracks a joke

gives him half a chance. Just in case the 'wink-wink' text is too subtle for you, the game also treats you to an appropriate pretty picture. It's a pity he wasn't able to sell the picture to the sinister arab - he might have got a bit more help from him!

There are several occasions in the plot when mere mortals would be

helpless in the face of certain death, but Garrett does have a mysterious force which he can call upon. At some time in the past our hero somehow acquired a voice in his head! Who and what the voice is remains a secret until the final chapter of the game and meanwhile you play the part of this disembodied alter ego. To assist Garrett you may increase the power of his commands by adding a '\$' symbol at the end of your command line (e.g. PUNCH\$). Just shows the power of the dollar! This option is limited and should only be used in dire emergencies. It should be pointed out

Whoever was responsible for the conversion of this game deserves to be horse-whipped. I don't believe for a moment that this version in any way reflects the original. If I were to make a list of the most basic errors I have found so far, it would fill the column twice over. The more I reflect upon this game the angrier I become. Not because the game is bad but because it is obvious that the original is probably very good. An essential part of producing a good adventure game is ensuring that it has been play-tested by its potential market. I cannot believe that a single English player gave this conversion more than a cursory glance before it was released. The parser has a very limited vocabulary and in one place it will even refuse to recognise an object unless you refer to the item as 'IT'. The graphics are good but they can't make up for the lack of gameplay.

AM

that the READ_ME file on the disk states that it is the '[' symbol which is used to deliver the extra power, but this has obviously been changed in the conversion without updating the file.

The background graphics and the manipulation of the character windows are as good as anything you will have seen to date in any comparable game. The opening digitised music is 'American sleaze' straight out of a forties gangster movie and the title screen has a look of the Art Deco found in old Odeon cinema foyers.

The pseudo-American speech and the pidgin German spoken by the villains is also in keeping with the comic book style. This is yet another French game which has been converted to English after no doubt being a great success on the Continent but like many of its forerunners it appears to have had much of the goodness



washed out of it during the Channel crossing.

STA

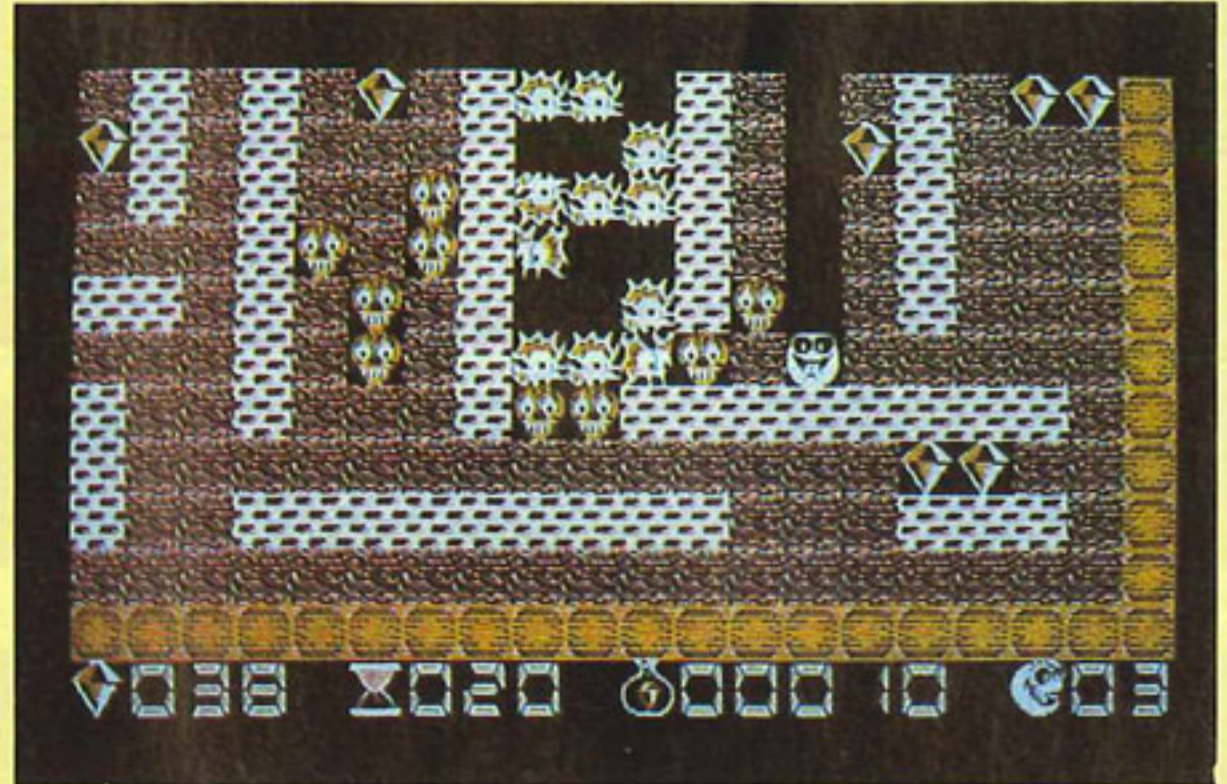
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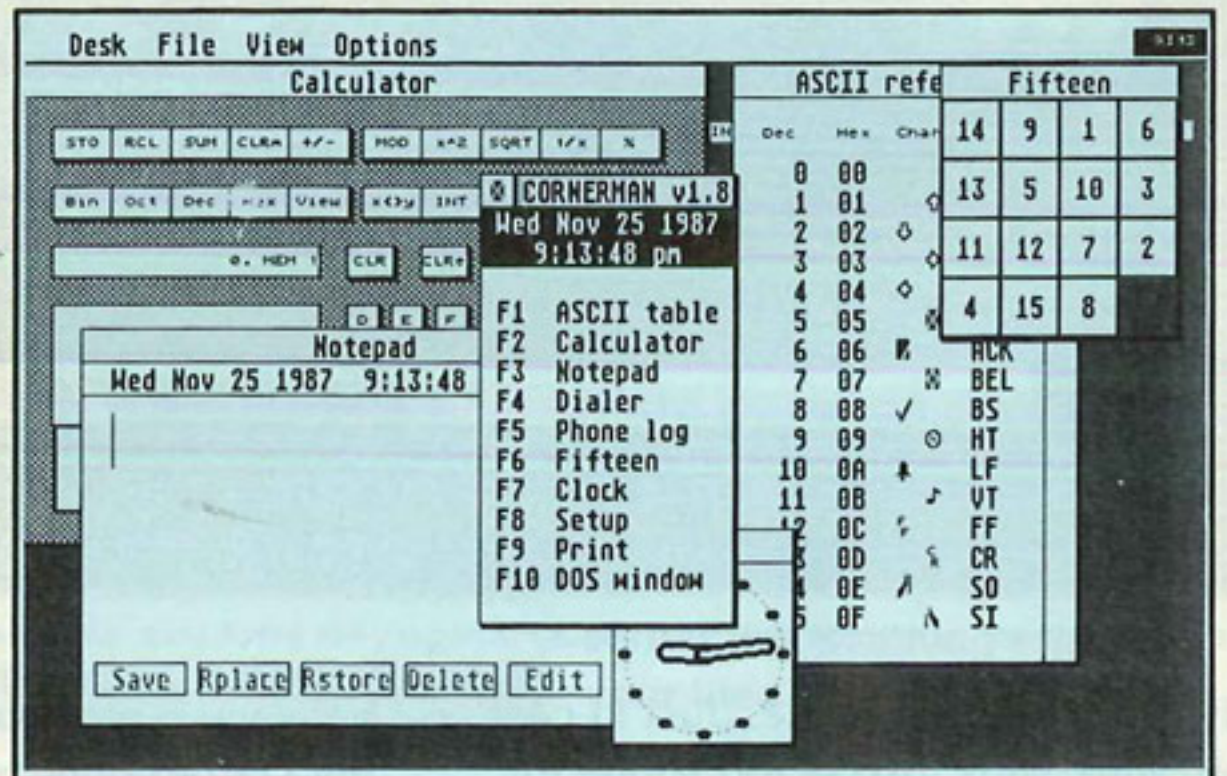
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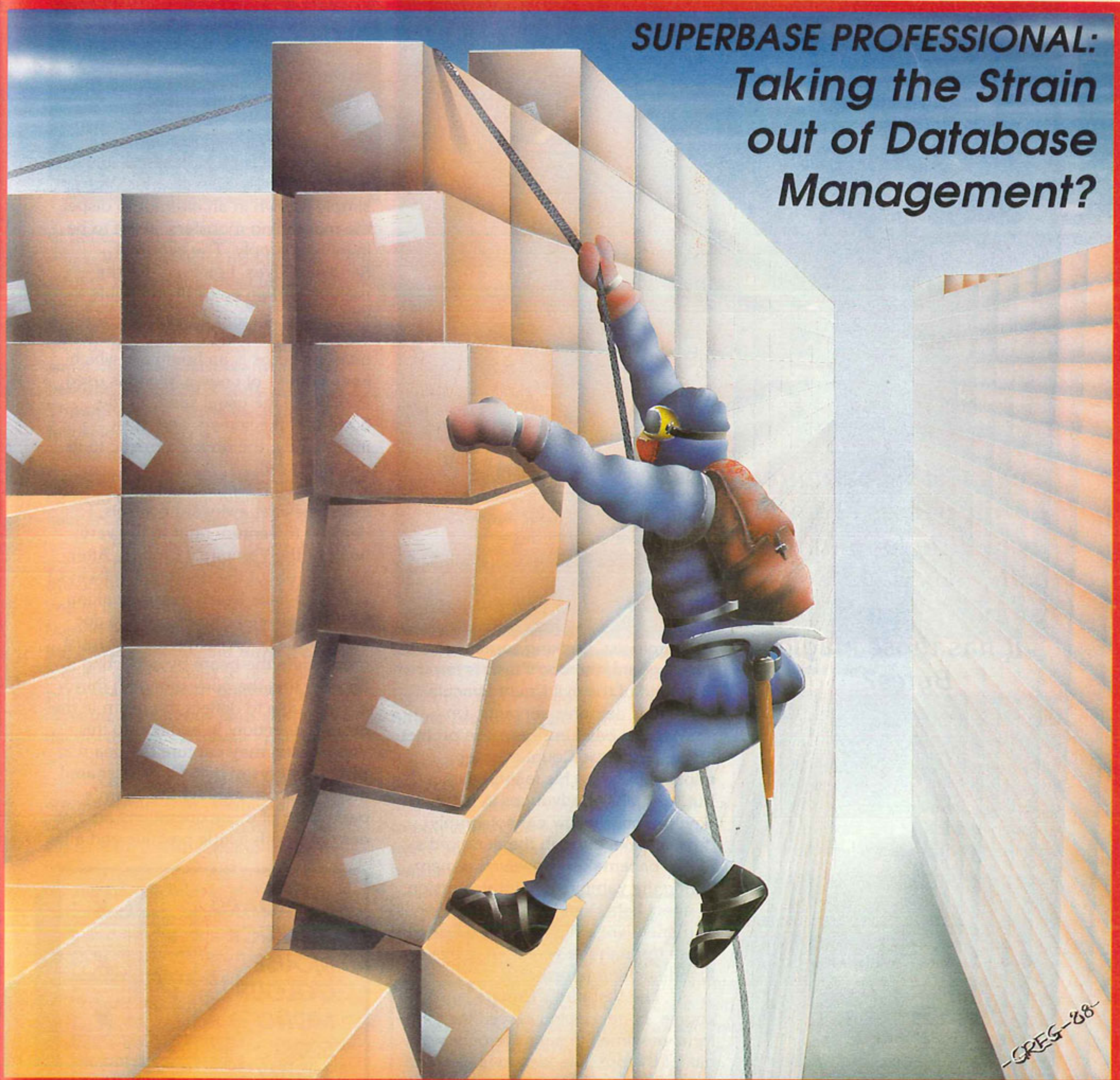
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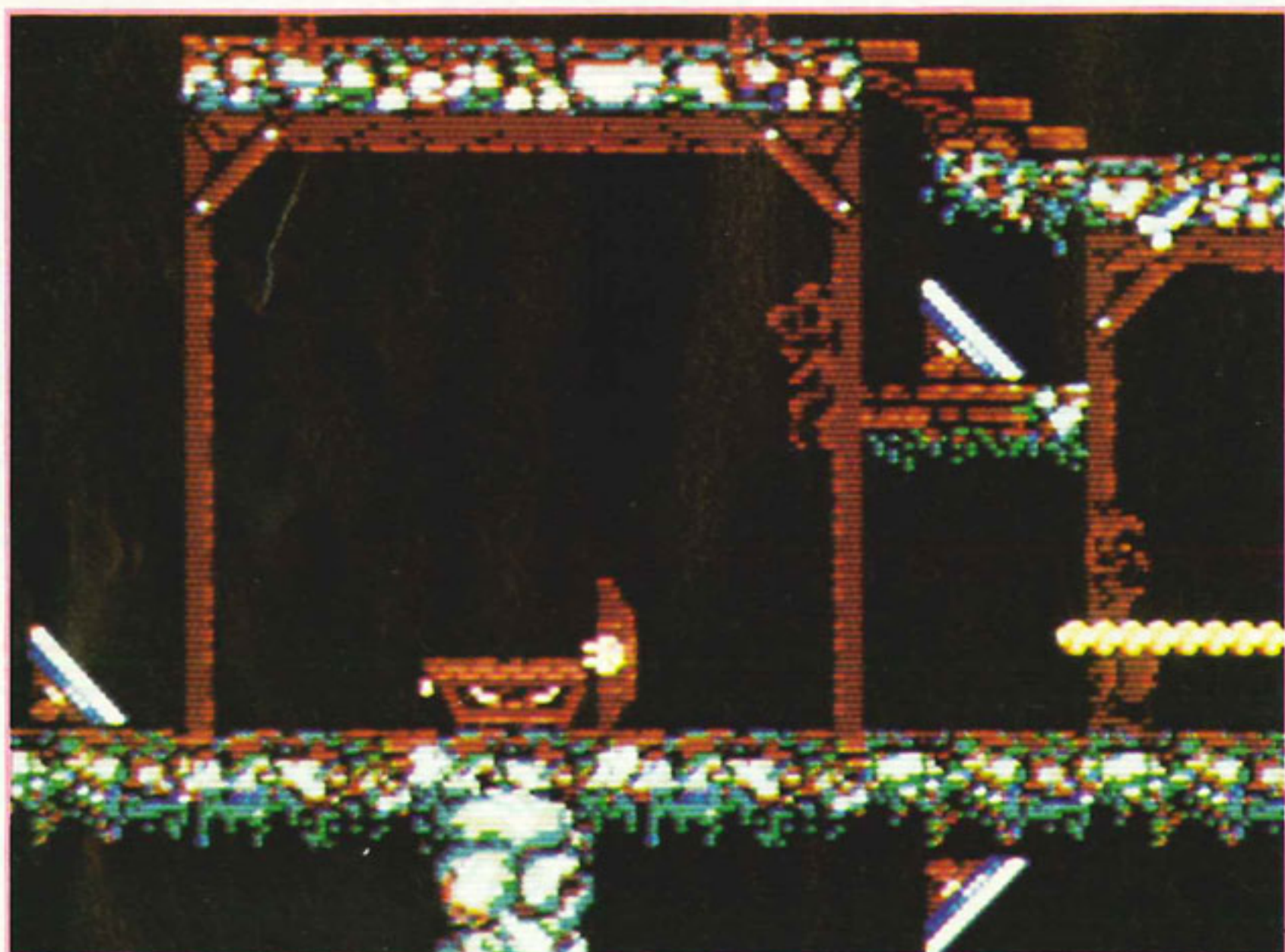
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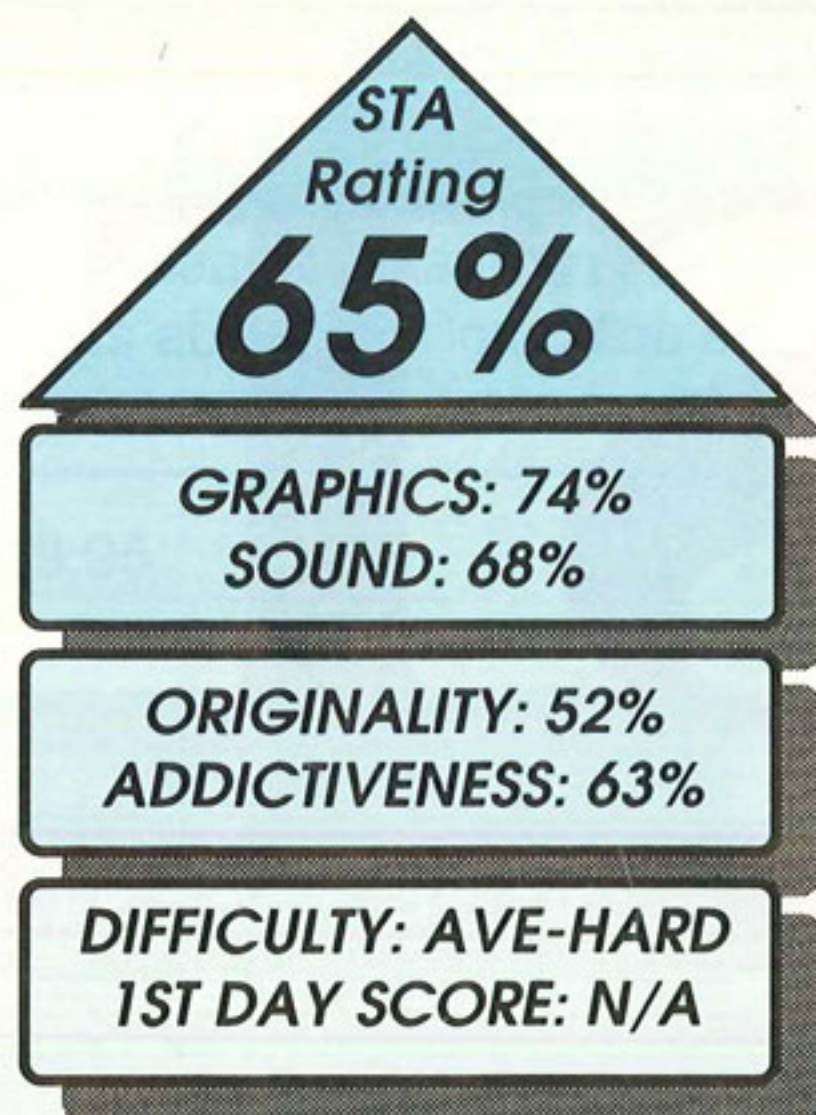
Oh, if only Bram Stoker had known the repercussions of his novel! First the book with all its other spin-off titles. Then, with the invention of cinema and television came the films. Companies such as the Hammer organization ensured we had our fill of



Peter Cushing and Christopher Lee's blood-thirsty antics. Now these vein-sheering creatures have found their way into our circuit boards.

Vampire's Empire is available from Gremlin Graphics. The game puts you in the now time-honoured role of Dr Van Helsing, a leading vampirologist. Looking somewhat old and haggard, the doc's task is to rid the world of the evil Count Dracula and all his demonic servants. Unshaven and bald, our hero can protect himself from the Count's lesser minions by using his faithful garlic. But, with all the advances in technology, the poor fellow cannot simply drive a stake through the dark lord's digital pacemaker. However, remembering the vampire's natural aversion to direct light, Van Helsing's mission is to manoeuvre a high-powered laser beam through the very soul of this blood-sucking parasite.

The Vampire's Empire is, of course, huge. Having played the game for some time I'm sure I've only seen half of the possible locations. As the game begins Van Helsing appears, his bulbous eyes madly surveying the immediate area. On the right of the



screen is my blood count. Although full at the outset of the game, it soon decreases as the elderly doctor receives numerous bites. On the left of the play area is an indicator displaying my garlic levels. Cloves, which are simply thrown in an attempt to dispel the marauding monsters, seem to be in infinite supply. The action of hanging cloves, however, despite making certain areas inaccessible to vampires, can only be performed three times. Situated just below these odorous herbs is an hourglass which keeps time - of course, blood is used in place of the usual sand. At the bottom of the screen, and most importantly, the doctor's magic tools are displayed.

Having familiarized myself with the somewhat awkward controls, I decided to venture right to the very heart of the Vampire's Empire. After roaming about the darkened hallways I spied the laser beam merrily making its way between mirrors. As the doc can't actually carry the laser he must manoeuvre the beam by deflecting it. By selecting the corresponding mirror it is possible to deflect the beam in the desired direction. In addition to this, Van Helsing may capture the beam within his crystal ball. Once ensnared the doctor can redirect the beam's path. Both of these operations are not easy but, with a little practice and a lot

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| MOUSE | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| COLOUR | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| MONO | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 520ST | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 1040ST | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

This is a fun little game, but I feel that something is sadly lacking. Running around, throwing bits of garlic and refracting sunlight, kept me occupied for quite a while, but when I stopped playing, I felt strangely dissatisfied.

As in most Magic Bytes games, the graphics are well animated and colourful. I especially liked the look on Van Helsing's face when he plummeted off a ledge. Sound is generally well done with a pleasant tune accompanying the game.

I cannot really recommend this unless you are a staunch fan of the platform genre. If it interests you, make sure you try before you buy - if only to save disappointment (and £20!).

SM

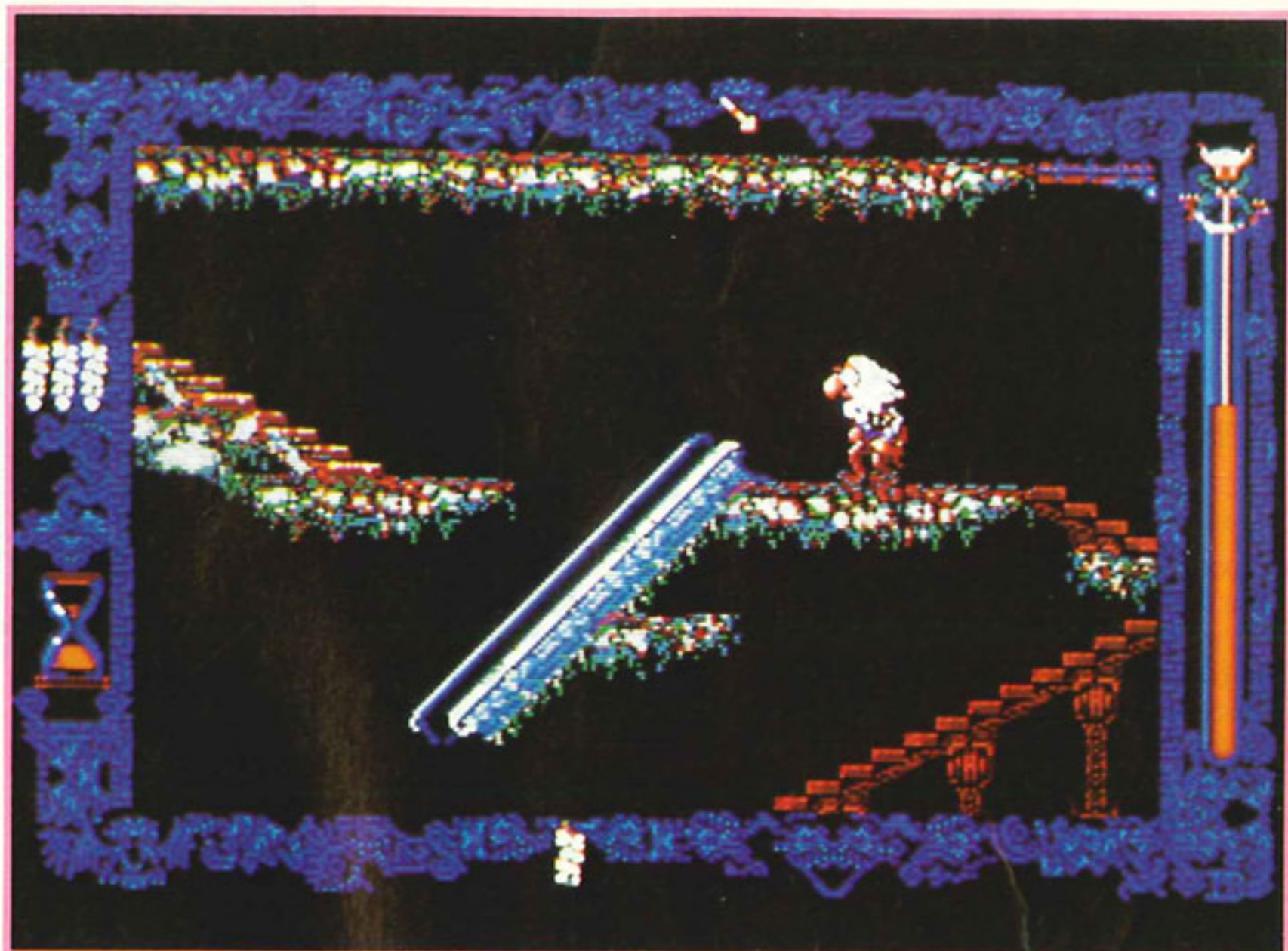
of patience, it is possible.

Whilst walking through the empire Van Helsing does tend to break into a little trot and he can often be found tumbling down flights of stairs only to recover seemingly unblemished. Surviving falls seems to have become the doctor's party trick. Throughout the game the hardened fellow leaps down would-be laundry chutes and gambols through trapdoors. Both of these structures can be used to avoid oncoming blood-suckers and to access other areas.

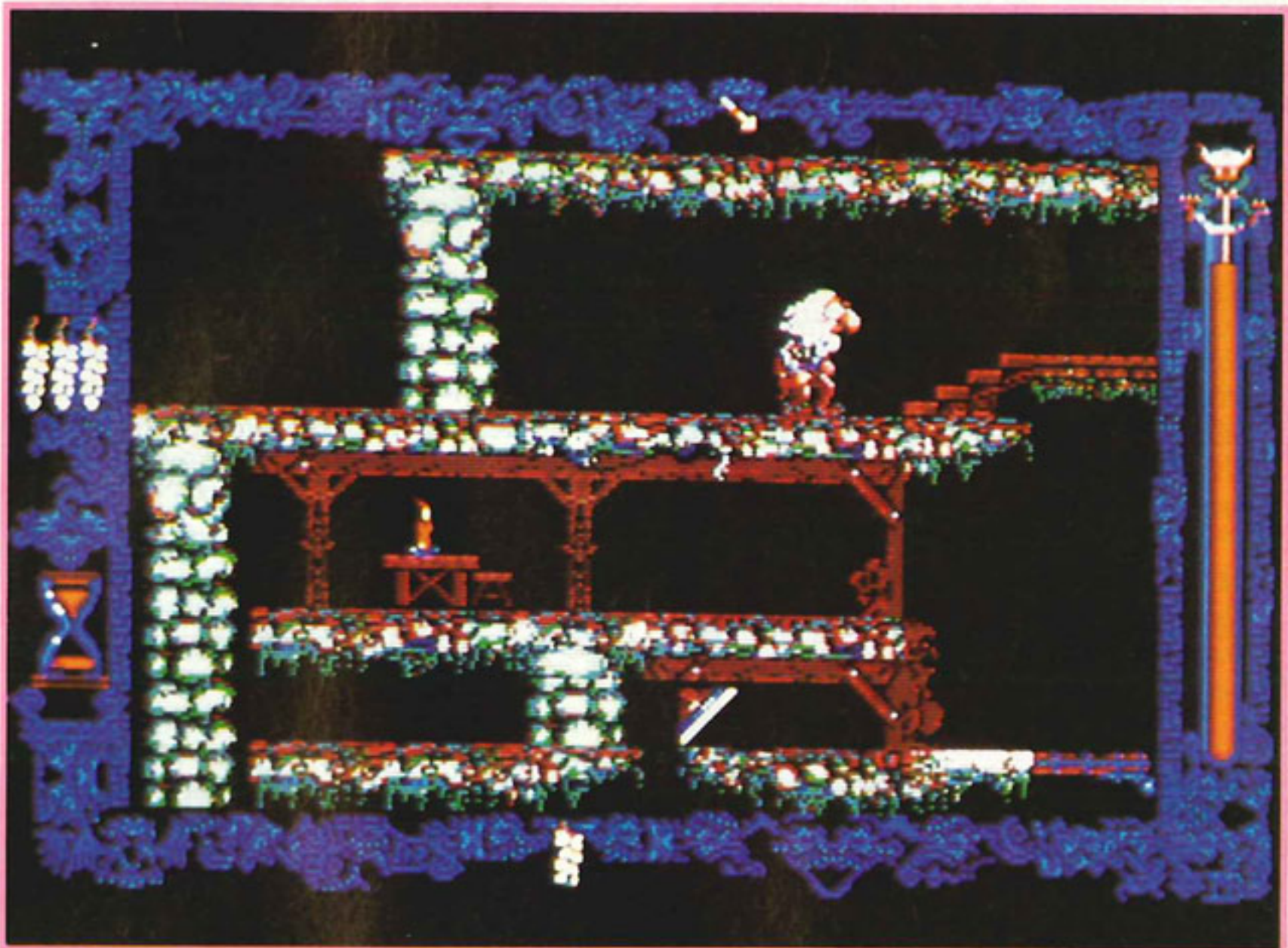
Should you pass by an unopened coffin you may awake one of the undead causing the fiend to follow you in its relentless search for warm human blood. It is possible to outrun the ghastly ghouls, but turning and lobbing garlic proves to be a more permanent solution. Why, however, does the odoriferous herb come from the doctor's eyes? Some connection with onions?

Littered throughout the empire are numerous other nasties all intent on Van Helsing's swift demise. Looking as if he is just about to make the winning conversion at Twickenham, the doctor can relieve himself of these minor irritations by placing a hefty boot in their direction. It is quite comical to see the rats flying off screen with a perplexed look on their faces.

Blood transfusions have been available from the NHS for some time now. Van Helsing, having paid all his National Insurance and the like, can receive this life-giving service. By collecting bronze jugs, the doc can



(above) The blue object in the centre of the picture is a slide which makes a pleasant change from all that stair climbing

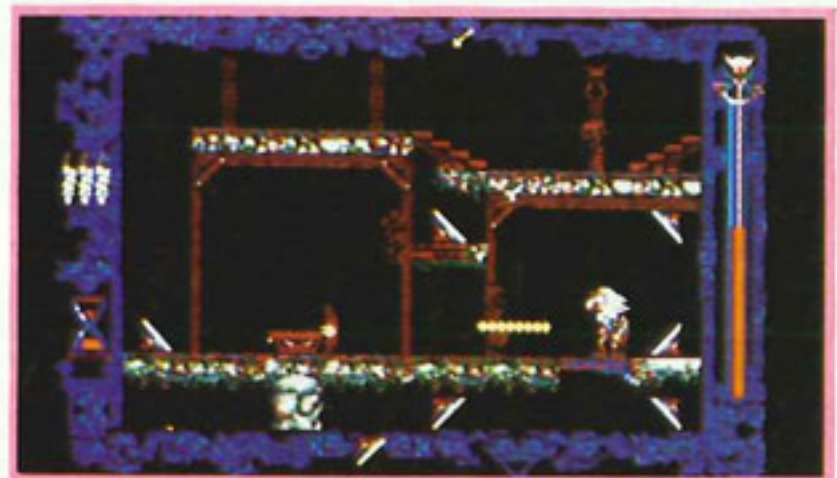


(above) Mile after mile of passageway must be travelled by poor old Van Helsing. The rooms just never seem to end. This really has to be one of the biggest games on the ST.

replenish his blood count thus allowing further progress to be made.

This game is by no means easy, the awkward controls making sure of that. I'm sure that no-one will finish it in a single sitting. You might not have to play it with the lights on, but do make sure you say your prayers before going to bed.

STA



The packaging suggests there are four elaborate game-phases. I think I have only seen the first, due mainly to the quirksome controls. Beautifully depicted screens and well-used music sets the horrific atmosphere perfectly. I would, however, remind anyone thinking of adding this game to their collection that it is somewhat difficult to control. Still, the game reminded me of earlier Spectrum titles available from Ultimate. So, if you want a real challenge reminiscent of those early games, you could do far worse than buy Vampire's Empire.

NC

BATTLESHIPS

ELITE (£14.99)

"Elite are really going back to basics here, with a game which I can remember playing discreetly during various lessons at school."

For those of you who were concentrating on the lessons while great sea battles were being won and lost at the back of the class-room, Battleships is a game combining simple strategy with sheer guess-work. It requires two grid maps with alpha-numeric coordinates. With grid maps hidden, each player positions his fleet by filling a number squares on a grid map. The aim is to plot the position of your opponent's vessels and every direct hit causes damage to the ship. The strategy of the game is to locate the rest of the squares that make up the ship and sink it.

The first option screen asks whether you wish to play against the computer,

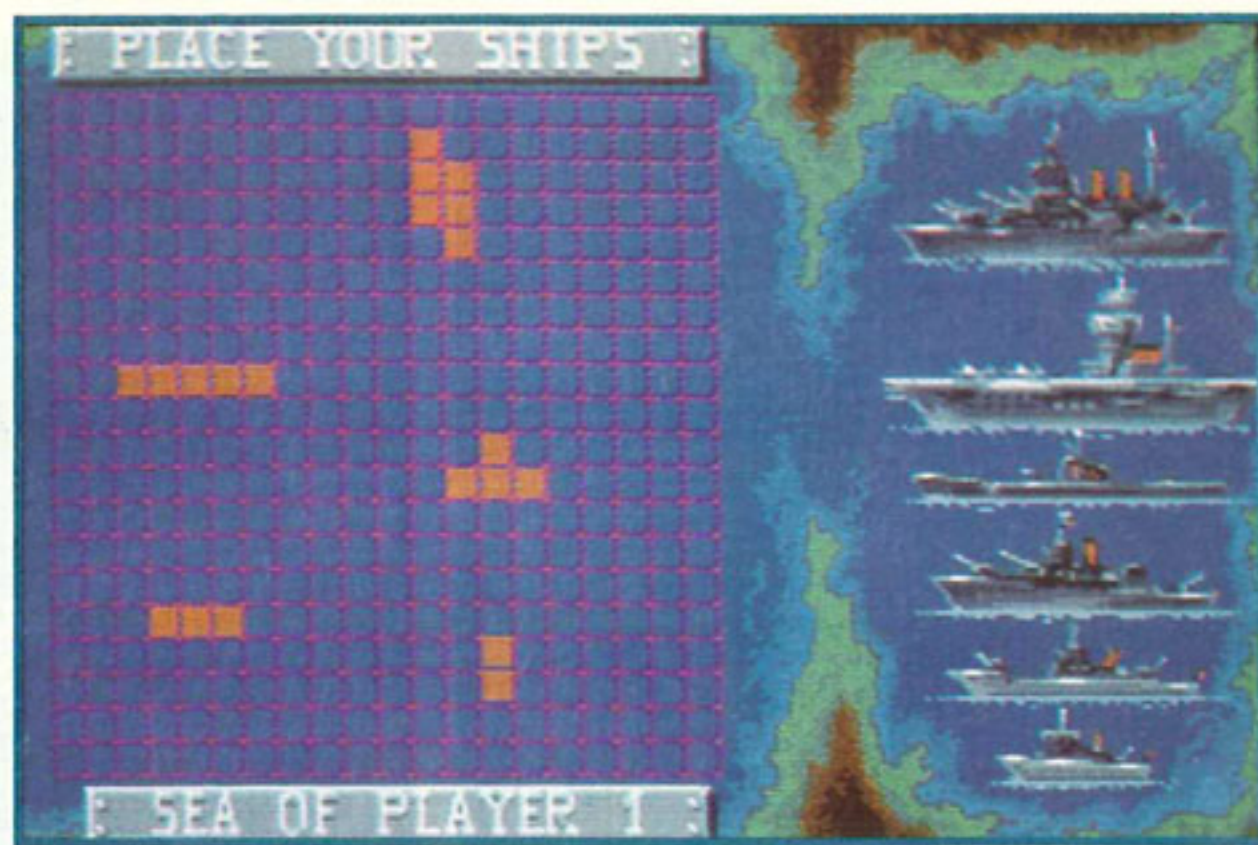
Battleships is such an obvious choice for computer simulation that I am surprised it has taken so long for somebody to conceive the idea. Elite have managed to update the game without detracting from the original appeal. The screens are well designed and easy to use and so the game-play is kept flowing. Additionally, the battle screen injects an extra dose of excitement which was obviously absent in the original format. The game may cost more than pencils and paper, but it is well worth the extra investment.

JS

with an opponent, or in a multi-player tournament. In the last option, only two can participate at once and the winner of

that battle goes on to compete with the victor of the next. When playing an opponent, secrecy is of paramount importance and so each player must turn away from the monitor while the opposition are positioning their fleet. The grid map dominates the plotting screen and the ships of differing size are displayed on the right-hand side. Placing a cross-shaped cursor over the first vessel and clicking the mouse button converts it into grid map squares. Each ship can be identified by its unique formation of squares and dragging the ship to the adjacent grid map, placing it in the desired position and clicking the mouse button anchors the ship - pardon the pun! The position can be altered by clicking the right-hand button which rotates the ship. After you have placed your final ship, your opponent's grid map appears and you must turn away from the screen while the enemy fleet takes position, then the battle commences!

Each player is presented with a clean grid map, which represents their opponent's map without showing the position of the vessels. At the top of the screen you are informed of how many missiles you can fire, and moving the cursor over various grid squares and clicking the mouse button represents missile fire. At first, it is advisable to spread the shots rather than group them, in order to cast the widest drag-net possible. Immediately, the grid-map screen is replaced by an action battle scene with two massive guns protruding from the base of the screen. The ships are positioned in the



Tactics are all important as you place your fleet

sea like sitting ducks as the guns begin to follow each missile coordinate in turn. If the coordinates are correct, a part of the unfortunate vessel explodes to signify damage. Once all of the squares have been hit, the ship submerges and an SOS life-ring floats on the surface of the water. In later phases of the game, enemy aircraft thwart your assault with a constant barrage of bombs.

STA

STA

Rating

66%

GRAPHICS: 58%

SOUND: 53%

ORIGINALITY: 62%

ADDICTIVENESS: 65%

DIFFICULTY: N/A

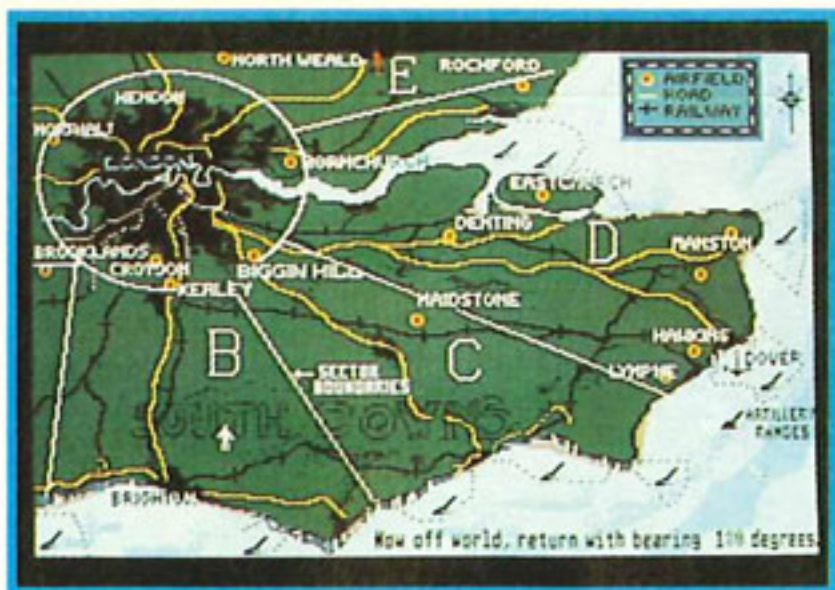
1ST DAY SCORE: N/A

Well, what can be said about a game that has kept thousands of kids fascinated since the dawn of sea warfare? The transition from scruffy bits of paper torn from the back of maths books to the computerised, mouse-operated game from Elite is certainly successful - it kept me quiet for a while, and it is the sort of game that will remain popular for a long time after the initial 'play it to death' syndrome has worn off. The music is one thing, however, that I wish could be changed - too much stopping and starting makes the game seem very disjointed. Overall, one to have in the collection whatever age you are - simple, harmless fun.

MM



The 18" guns let loose at your enemy - "you've sunk my battleship!"



SPITFIRE 40

MIRRORSOFT (£24.99)

"Spitfire 40 must have clocked up a few thousand flying hours since its maiden flight into the blue pixel skies of certain 8-bit computers."

STA
Rating

70%

GRAPHICS: 68%
SOUND: 50%

ORIGINALITY: 70%
ADDICTIVENESS: 65%

DIFFICULTY: EASY
1ST DAY SCORE: N/A

Spitfire 40 is a commendable flight simulation and in most respects is very near the 'real thing'. However, the game is seriously let down by its speed of movement. The response to controls is made slightly sluggish to emulate a real aircraft but they seem to forget that the Spitfire was a fighter, not a passenger jet and, as such, was designed for quick response to joystick inputs. The whole tempo of the game is such that it becomes frustrating. This is mainly brought about by the quality solid graphics, but in my opinion, gameplay is of the utmost importance in Spitfire 40 and this element has been neglected. Overall, a very good game if you are patient enough to cope with the almost slow-motion flying.

MM

This popular aircraft simulation comprises three flying options which attempt to present elementary aspects of flight and combat in this classic aircraft. Selecting 'Practice' or 'Combat' mode incorporates take-off and landing. In these two modes, the 'Spit' is positioned on the runway for take-off. Uniquely, the cockpit is split into two separate screens: one displays the view through the cockpit windscreen, the other houses the instrumentation panel. Only one screen can be displayed at one time and so pressing the space-bar switches between the two.

The joystick takes the place of the control-column. During the take-off procedure, the instrument panel enables you to monitor the gauges. Tapping the 'F' key raises and lowers the flaps which must be up for take-off. Pressing the 'Q' key powers up the engine and increases the rpm, while the adjacent 'W' key decreases the revs. 2000 rpm is recommended for take-off and after pressing the 'B' key to release the brake, you must revert back to the cockpit view. The aircraft is moving slowly down the runway and increasing power to maximum rpm takes the ground-speed to 100 mph, then easing back on the joystick achieves take-off. The Practice mode deals purely with take-off, flight and landing, whereas Combat includes dogfights against Messerschmitts. You are briefed on how many enemy aircraft are expected, their distance in miles and their bearing.

Once airborne, the scrolling is as smooth as solid graphics will allow, although it is rather slow. However, pressing keys F1 to F5 reveals ground detail, such as roads, railways, patchwork fields and three-dimensional buildings. This variation on the terrain enhances the feeling of movement and speed. Pressing the 'M' key reveals a map screen on which you can plot your course and prepare to engage the enemy. Without the aid of a radar, the first sight of an enemy plane is through the cockpit windscreen. Adopting

combat tactics, you can tail the aircraft and manoeuvre the Spitfire until the 'bandit' is centered in the fixed target sights; pressing the firebutton then activates the gun. The enemy aircraft tries to lose you by changing course and altitude and the battle for supremacy in the air commences. A humble rear-view mirror indicates an enemy aircraft directly behind you and swift and evasive action is needed to shake him off. Although you cannot climb vertically in the Spitfire, its rapid climbing ability has been written into the simulation and so a sudden increase in altitude should lose the pursuing Messerschmitt, and 'Looping' should place the enemy aircraft in front of you.

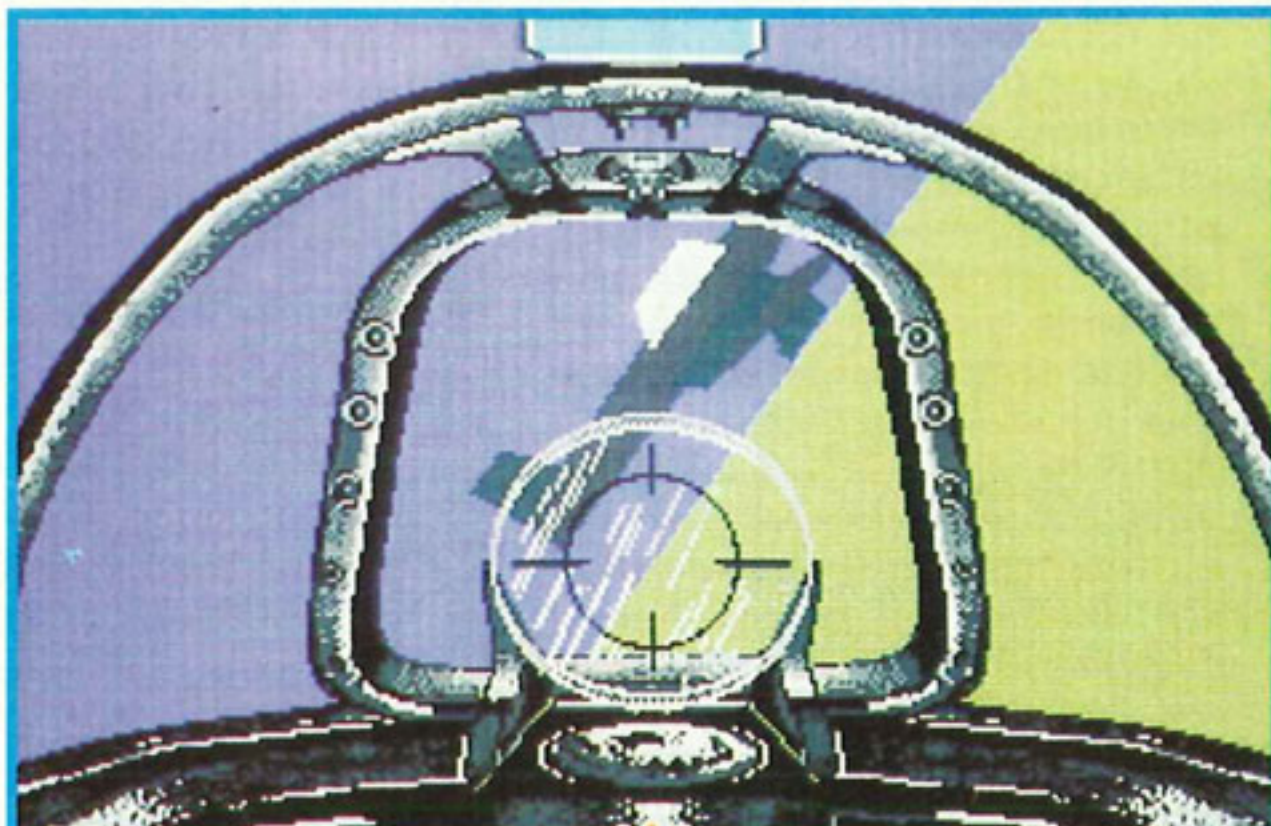
The Merlin V12 is thirsty rather than thrifty, so keeping an eye on the fuel gauge is important. If the fuel level is low, it is advisable to select the map, relocate the airfield and prepare to land. You must manoeuvre the aircraft so that it is facing the approach to the airstrip and begin to reduce airspeed to 140 mph. It is best to carry out the final stages of the landing with the instrumentation panel on screen, so that you can monitor the airspeed and height and use the Artificial Horizon to level the aircraft. Pressing 'G' drops the undercarriage and you can return to the cockpit screen for the end of the landing.

If a real Spitfire is as easy to fly as this simulation suggests, it is little wonder that we won the war. Obviously, I cannot gauge how faithful a simulation Spitfire 40 is, but I can recommend it for its entertainment value. If the cockpit view and instrumentation panel were housed in the same screen and there was a greater variety of missions, Spitfire 40 would be in the same league as Microprose's F15 Strike Eagle.

JS



Spitfire 40 features a unique head down cockpit display



Dagga, dagga, dagga - another bandit bites the dust



Vilgin

A limited number of smart bombs - be careful, as they kill other scientists as well as aliens.



Elderat

No Project



Lsed

Front and back shields, stops missiles destroying your ship.



Manx

Fire backwards and forwards alternately, very useful when you need to collect a scientist in a tricky dead end or tunnels.



Festus

Not much use this one, it self-distracts your ship!



Ferroun

No Project.



Sador

Increases score quite dramatically. Be careful as while the score goes up, down goes your manoeuvrability.



Vegas

Makes your ship invisible to aliens and alien missiles.



Anthras

No Project.



Rastan

Mega Speed, ideal for pulling away in tricky situations



Morgan

Slows aliens down to an absolute crawl while keeping your ship at full speed - just stroll up and blast 'em.



EX

Appears to have no project, but I suspect this one features further on in the game.

"Scrolling shoot-'em-ups are travelling in a new direction since the discovery of smooth, horizontal-scrolling on the ST."

This uninspiring modification was first used in Creation's Skyrider, which was billed as a new phenomenon in arcade entertainment. But far from being described as pioneering, the press dubbed Skyrider: 'A horizontal-scrolling Goldrunner, which was more playable if you turned the monitor on its side'. Nevertheless, with their massive digit permanently on the

I just can't get enough scrolling shoot-'em-ups! But even if you usually shy away from this over-subscribed genre, RTG is well worth checking out. The quality of the alien dog fighting, the speed of the graphics and the host of bolt-on weaponry make this one of the most playable ST games I've seen.

As for the graphics and sound. Well, what would you expect from messers Bak, Lyon and Whitaker, other than top-quality, near-arcade standard backdrops, scrolling, sprites and effects.

The game is desperately hard and despite being quite proud of my RTG prowess I have only managed to reach level 6.

And how does it compare with the likes of Xenon and Hades Nebula? - Well it's good, but it's not that good!

HG

RETURN TO GENESIS

FIREBIRD (£19.95)

pulse of the market, Firebird have released Return to Genesis, which intends to boldly scroll where only Skyrider has scrolled before - at least on the ST! It is necessary for each new addition to this over-subscribed theme to introduce a different aspect to the game and, in this case, it is the evacuation of stranded scientists. This is not entirely original, but it's a welcomed diversion from the mindless destruction. No Firebird game seems complete without speech synthesis introducing you to the game and so remarkably clear speech welcomes you to Return to Genesis.

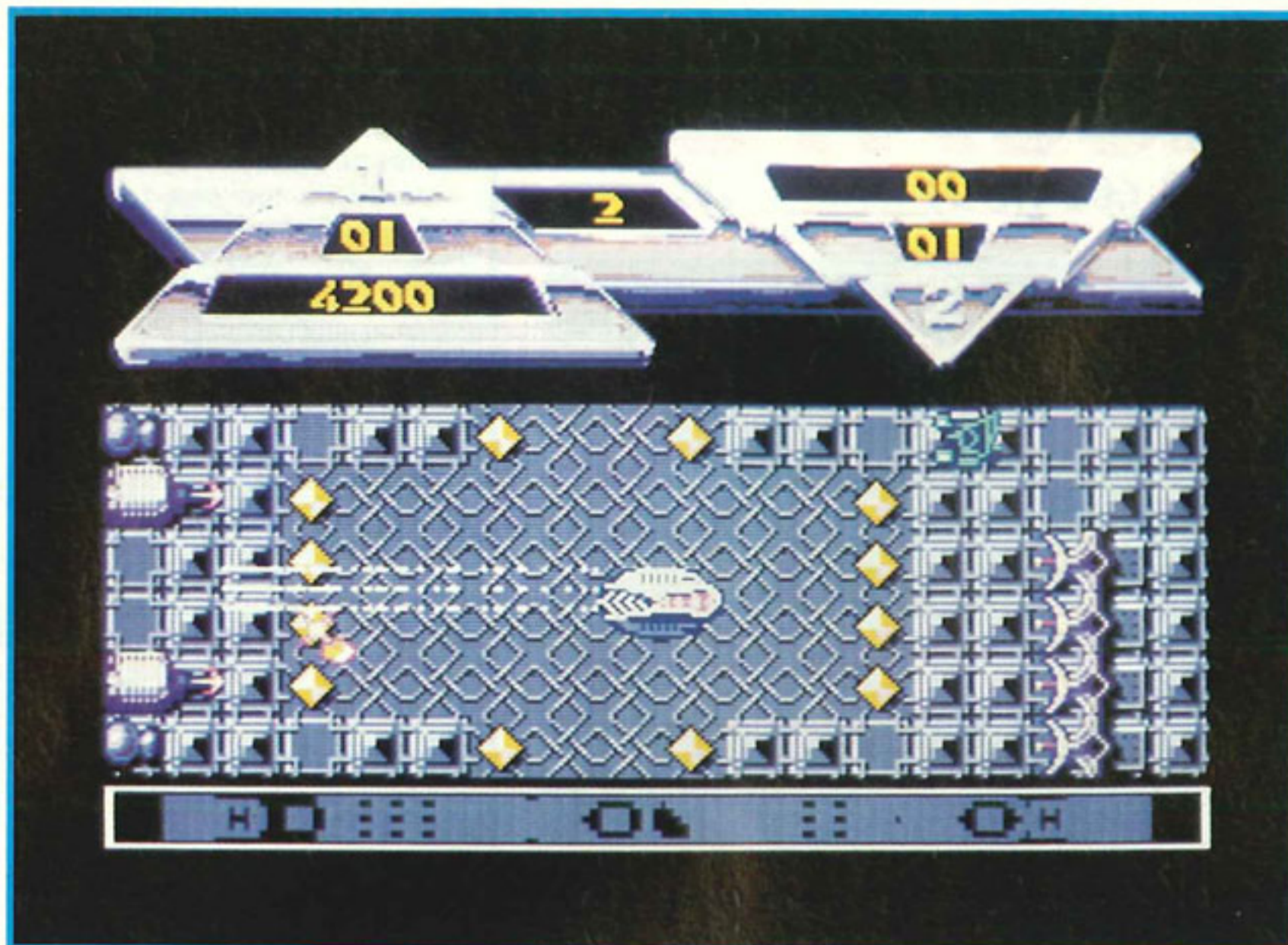
The game is spread over ten levels, each containing a different terrain to assault. Traditionally, the first level acts as an easy introduction to the game, allowing you to become accustomed to the controls. In Return to Genesis, however, you are literally jettisoned into the thick of the action. As described, the objective is to skim across the terrain and pick up as many stranded scientists as possible. Level one shows the so-called Skimmer moving slowly from the voids of space and onto the first terrain. The screen scrolls from right to left, although the Skimmer remains static in the centre at all times. You can change from joystick to mouse control during the course of the game without

having to return to an option screen and, by way of a change, the mouse offers exceptionally responsive controls, although the joystick is preferable.

The game occupies the bottom half of the screen, while the top displays basic instrumentation that could be housed in a fraction of the space. As described, the terrain scrolls while the Skimmer itself remains fixed in the center of the screen. The scrolling is, however, governed by your controls and so moving the joystick or

I compared Return to Genesis with Microdeal's Goldrunner and quickly concluded that for this type of game, vertical-scrolling is far more effective. Admittedly, the Skimmer is very manoeuvrable and responsive, but the speed of the scrolling causes a blur which makes all objects, adversaries and the Skimmer itself, undefinable against the confusing backdrops. In my opinion, this change to horizontal-scrolling is a pointless exercise, as it is detrimental rather than improving!

JS



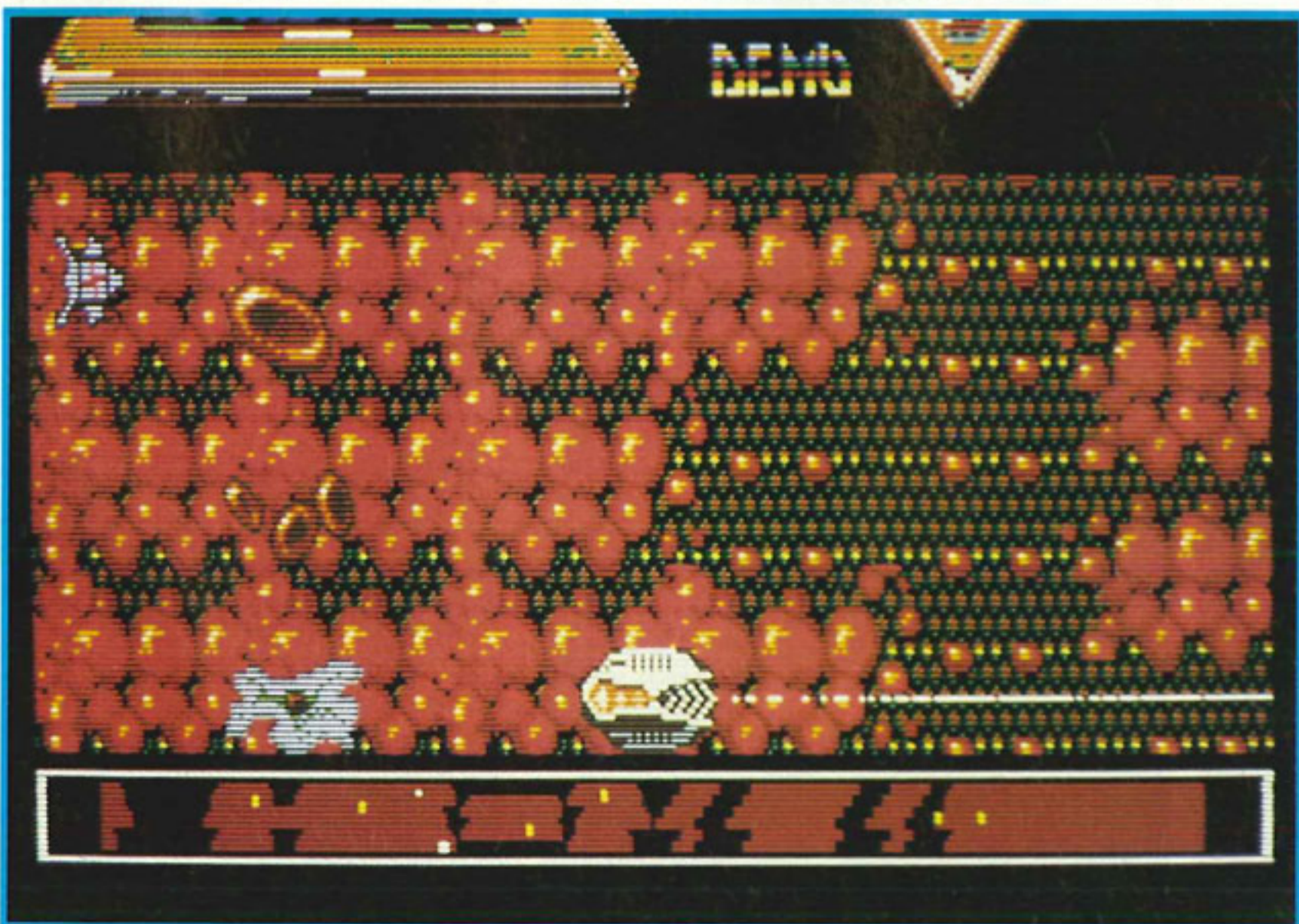
Three lasers blaze from your ship as you fly over the wierd alien landscape

mouse to the left or right speeds up the scrolling considerably. Naturally, this gives the illusion of the Skimmer moving swiftly across the screen, even though physically it remains in the centre. Manipulating the joystick backwards and forwards manoeuvres the craft across the width of the screen, which takes less than a second. This gives you an idea of the speed of the game as well as the confined game-play area. Changing direction at any speed halts the scrolling immediately and the craft flips over and continues in the opposite direction. This swift directional response is crucial and without it, Return to Genesis would be unbearably frustrating.

Each of the terrains is made up of two or more layers, with a visible top layer which can lead into unavoidable underpasses that render the Skimmer momentarily invisible. In the first level, there are several large spacecraft passing across the static terrain in the background. With the joystick residing in the centre, the screen scrolls at a steady pace, while accelerating

to the left or right creates a blurring effect. The opposition are some of the most intelligent and tenacious I have encountered. These variform craft emerge from the terrain, pursue the Skimmer and spit Skimmer-seeking missiles in all directions. The top part of the terrain is covered in obstacles and barriers, which cause the Skimmer to rebound and continue in the opposite direction. When the Skimmer submerges into the network of underpasses and tunnels, the opposition follow and it is here that they are at their most dangerous.

The scientists stand conspicuously on the landscape and simply swooping over the top picks them up. The imaginative scenario describes how evacuating certain scientists can modify and improve your weaponry. Initially, the Skimmer is equipped with a single cannon, the power of which can be increased two or three times. Ensuing sections of terrain change from uniformed industrial scenes into molecular globules that are somehow



Some of the landscapes are unbelievably psychedelic - makes alien spotting very hard indeed

Steve Bak has written quite a few shoot'em-ups for the ST. What is different about Return to Genesis is that it is a horizontal game - a good one, too. The game's idea of rescuing scientists and using their knowledge to enhance the craft comes over quite well, although visually these super-intelligent beings look more like a gang of wanted space pirates! The game's graphics are all very well depicted and the multiple layered scrolling effect helps give the screen an extra feeling of depth. The sonics are good too, and speech is included as usual. I could say Return to Genesis is a good game, but I found it too fast. As my craft sped across the screen, the combination of the scrolling effect and the uses of colours made my eyes blur. Because of this the game is best played with a friend helping to control the options. As for me, I'll leave it until someone comes up with a poke to slow it down a little.

NC

strung together to form a confusing tapestry of underpasses. At the base of the screen, a map displays the location of the obstacles within the level and also pinpoints the position of the enemy craft. Although each level introduces a more confusing and luridly coloured terrain, the theme of evacuation remains throughout the entire game.

STA

STA
Rating

70%

GRAPHICS: 83%
SOUND: 73%

ORIGINALITY: 63%
ADDICTIVENESS: 55%

DIFFICULTY: VERY HARD
1ST DAY SCORE: 52000

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| JOYSTICK | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| MOUSE | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| COLOUR | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| MONO | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 520ST | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 1040ST | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

BMX SIMULATOR

CODE MASTERS (£14.99)



The overhead view shown throughout BMX simulator is reminiscent of Super Sprint

"You would have thought that the more commercial software companies would have exploited the popularity of BMX to the full."

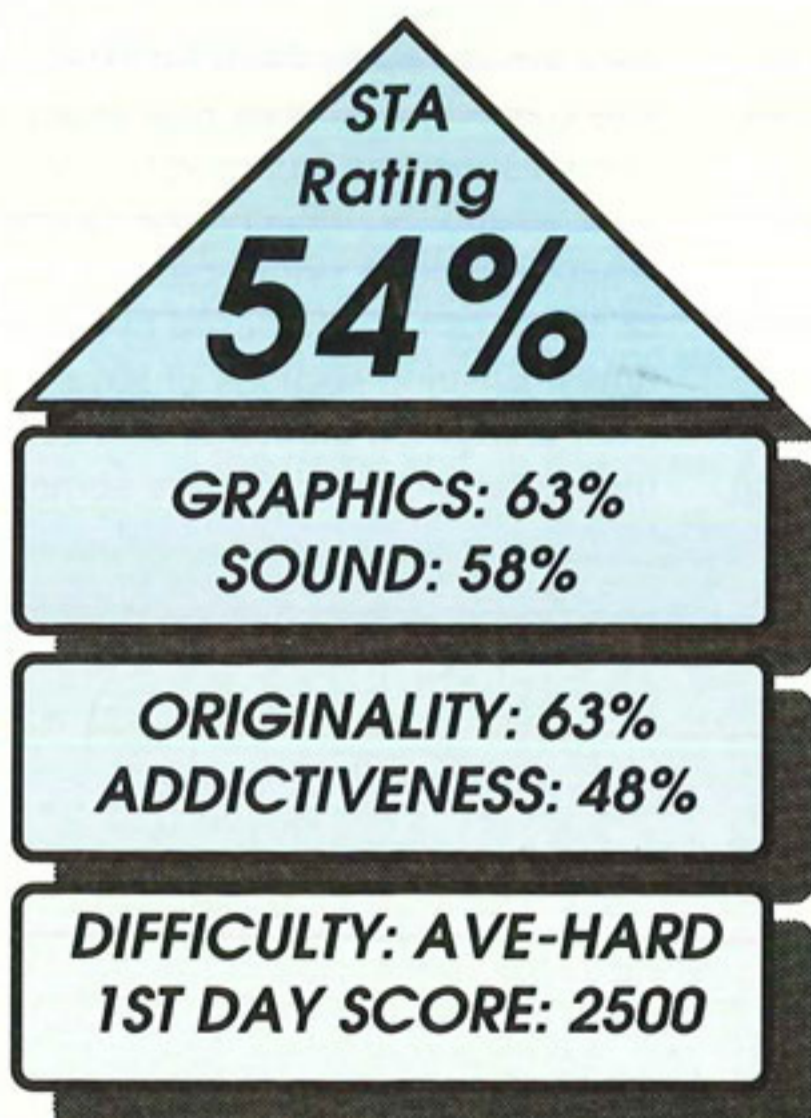
But, on the contrary, it was left to the youthful Code Masters, who worked on the assumption that if someone owned a BMX, they would more than likely have a games computer as well. They developed BMX Racers, which duly became one of the world's best selling games. BMX Simulator is the much improved follow-up; but are there enough sixteen-bit users who are interested in BMX to equal the success that the game will undoubtedly attain in the eight-bit market?

With the aid of a comprehensive option screen and the space bar, you can swiftly and easily change and select the controls. Additionally, there is a head-to-head option or you can choose to race

BMX Simulator could be described as a pedal-powered Super Sprint. Overhead-view circuit games seem to induce enthusiastic participation from the most reluctant player and BMX Simulator is no exception. The controls are very unforgiving and the rider comes to grief many times during the race. The BMX theme might not appeal to some ST users, but whatever the vehicle, this style of racing game is great for two player participation.

JS

against a computer-controlled rider. You can opt to control the game with joystick or keyboard and pressing the 'N' key changes the number of laps that you want to race in each course. Codemasters have again adopted the overhead view of the circuit, which proves to be so popular in car-racing games. The circuit itself is a mud track which, over seven levels of



Winner takes all, including this rather shiny cup

I, probably like many other people, have had just about enough of BMX bikes. Sure enough, kids love them and I would be the first to agree that some of the tricks they perform are very clever, but why do we have to have them all over our computer screens? Even with its cheaper price tag, BMX Simulator is plain naff. To be fair, the graphics are good and the sound's not too bad, but the playability is really poor. Having played the game for over an hour, I don't think I managed to complete a race without having some sort of accident. The game, if played against the computer, is terribly biased - I have never beaten the swine yet! It does have some nice touches, but really I couldn't recommend it. Save those pennies and buy something more worthwhile.

NC

progressive complexity, changes from conventional oval circuit to a snaking mud path that is fraught with hazards. The basic instrumentation comprises two lap timers for each rider, which are accurate to tenths of a second and, at the base of the screen, a narrow message strip appears momentarily to start the race and also to inform you when the game is over.

The riders are positioned on a starting ramp which is located at a different part of the track on each course. The message strip starts the race; Riders Ready, Pedals Ready - Go! Pressing the firebutton accelerates the bike and releasing the pressure activates a rather abrupt braking system. The only sound effect is the pumping of pedals, which increases and decreases with the speed of the bike. Thankfully, there is no bubbly and irritating arcade music. The steering controls are very responsive and, at first, prone to over-steer. The first track is a traditional oval shape with a small representation of the obstacles and hazards which appear throughout the game. There are two mud bumps at either end of the track which must be approached at speed, and as the bike clears the bump this acceleration must be killed immediately in order to stay on the track. On colliding with roadside objects or the computer-controlled bike, your rider parts company with his bike. If the race is closely contended, the winner can be decided by selecting what is reputed to be the first slow-motion action-replay ever to be incorporated in a computer game.

Ensuing levels introduce a variety of hazards, such as, a heavily rutted track, sharper hill and bump gradients and a winding path where puddles threaten to dampen your rider's ardour. Depending on how many laps you are racing, each race must be completed before time runs out. The level of difficulty in each successive circuit rises more swiftly than your game-skill and, if you fail to complete the race within the allotted time, you must return to the first circuit and start all over again.

STA

PINK PANTHER

MAGIC BYTES (£19.95)

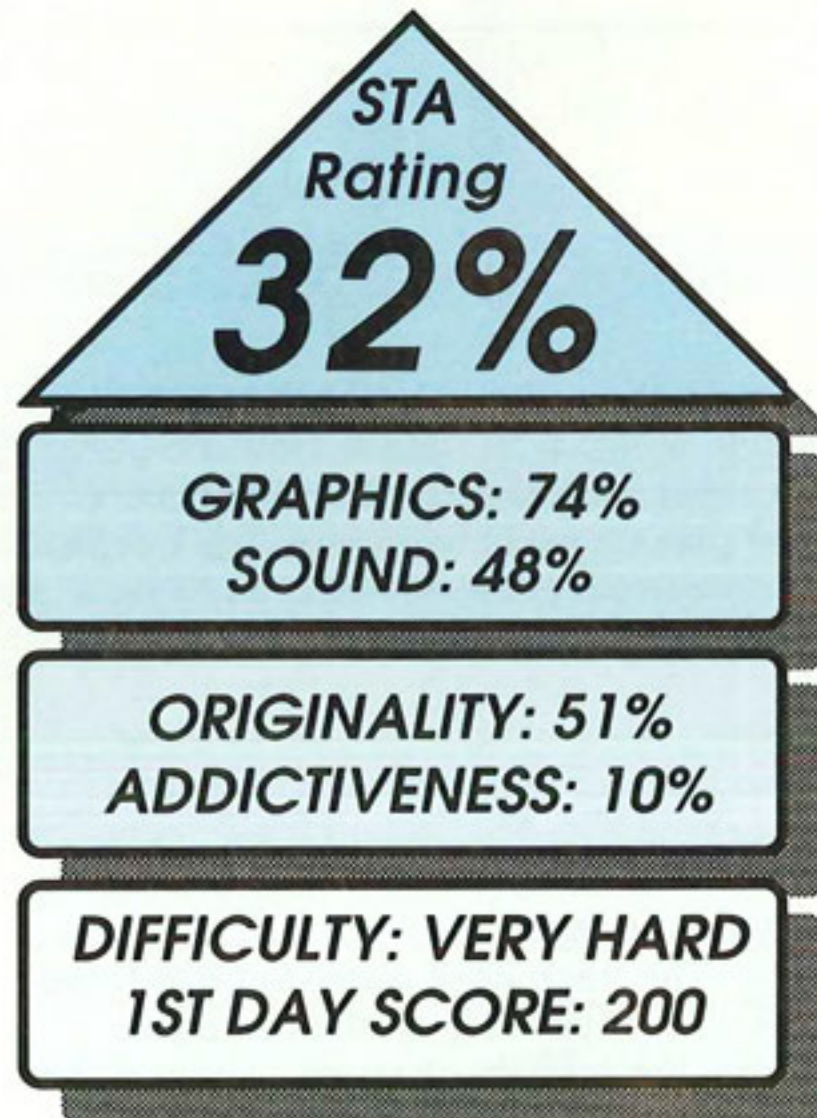
"The rinky-dink Panther is back, and starring in his very own computer game must really make him feel in the pink. Will the game be a roaring success or will the Panther have cause to blush?"

Not content with converting every coin-op in sight, the software industry has now turned to the comic-book characters of our youth. Dan Dare, Asterix, Garfield and even the Flintstones have managed to find their way onto our screens. Not wishing to be left out of the fun, the ever cool Pink Panther has recently appeared on the ST - the character's creator, Blake Edwards, must be laughing all the way to the bank!

The game's storyline is very simple. Our hero has, unfortunately, fallen on hard times, so hard, in fact, that he is forced to take on a job. Now, not a lot of people know this, but the Panther is a qualified butler. Soon after visiting his local employment agency the panther finds himself under the direction of his miserly master. The pay being poor and the Panther's sights set high, force our hero to indulge in petty pilfering. Whilst the master is supposedly asleep the Panther figures he can nick enough goodies to keep himself in the manner to which he has become accustomed. What a shock it must have

been for him to discover that his boss is an incurable somnambulist. Therefore the Panther not only has to fill his coffers but he also has to prevent his master from walking into any obstacles and waking himself up.

Of course, the Pink Panther would



be nothing if it were not for Surete's very own super sleuth, the bungling Inspector Clouseau. The Panther's arch enemy can also be found tip-toeing through the mansion, hell-bent on catching our light-fingered friend. Controlling both the inspector and the sleepy man of the house, becomes the main part of the game: the collecting of the booty becoming merely a way to progress to further levels.

So, just how can the Panther stop

Pink Panther is a truly abominable game. The graphics and sound may be well drawn and implemented but the game's playability is appalling. Should you manage to guide the sleepwalking master about, then the inspector will certainly get you. What a pity the programmers didn't make the game a little more easy to play - I sat and tried to play the game for over two hours without making much progress. So, unless you're an ardent Panther fan or you have the patience of Job, then I would strongly advise you to leave the Pink Panther strictly alone.

NC

his boss from waking up? Well, this feline has come prepared. Apart from physically bumping the walker, the Panther can ring his little tea bell to make his boss change direction. Some obstacles, however, cannot simply be walked over or around. Because of such obstructions the Panther has access to see-saws and catapults. These objects can be used to take care of the master but other methods must be used to interrupt Clouseau's progress. Inflatable Panthers and burglars can be positioned to lure the inspector over pre-positioned holes and thus hinder his investigations.

Selecting the various options becomes a real headache and because of this the game loses much of its appeal. It's a real pity that the programmers didn't come up with a different method of controlling the Panther and his actions. Graphically the game is particularly clear; the houses are well drawn and the characters all look like their cartoon originals, even down to the Panther's laid-back walk and the inspector's tasteless dress sense. The game's soundtrack, however, does not keep to Henry Mancini's original Dum-Dee-Dum theme. This is a pity as it was the original score which used to send millions flocking to their TV screens to see their pink hero getting up to his madcap capers.

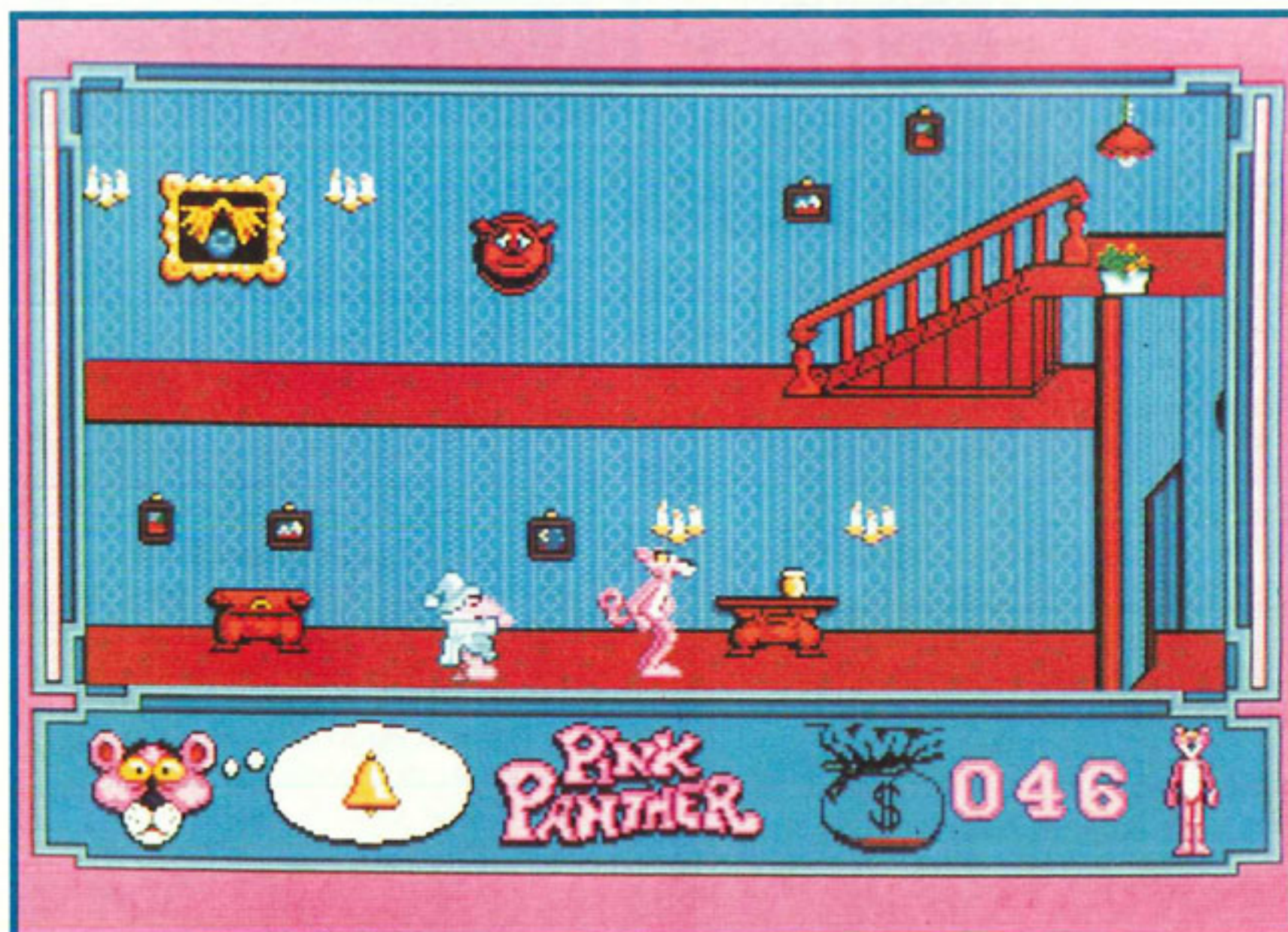
STA

I was very impressed by the graphics and, in particular, the animation on the pink hero himself, but surprisingly, the game does not have the original theme tune.

Where the game fails, is in the gameplay aspect - probably the most important field of all. The control system is over-complicated and had me banging the walls in frustration on many occasions. Having to redirect the sleepwalker is tedious and having finally managed it on one occasion, the wretched Inspector caught me straight away.

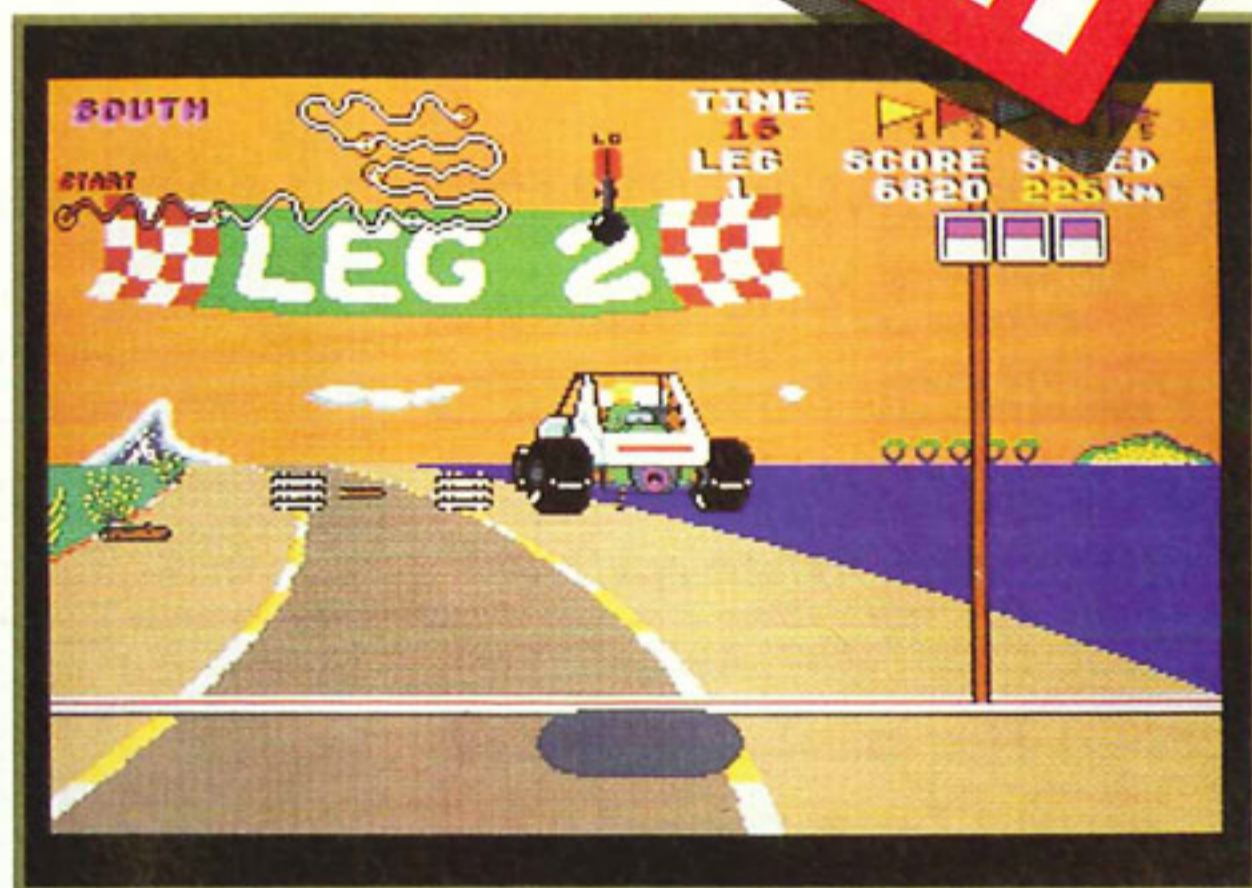
I can find absolutely nothing about this game to recommend. Gremlin must be wondering what on earth Magic Bytes have done to a theme which did have some potential.

SM



BUGGY BOY

ELITE (£19.99)



"Bouncing out of the arcades, Buggy Boy is yet another coin-op conversion from Elite."

The program itself is a form of racing game, a la Pole Position. This time, however, the mode of transport is a somewhat well-sprung beach buggy and the track is littered with hundreds of obstacles. Whilst reading the general blurb on the back of the inlay, I patiently waited for the game to load and readied myself for what Elite termed, "...the ride of your life!"

While the program loaded the screen displayed a neat picture of my vehicle, complete with huge chrome exhausts. On completion, my view changed to the options screen. No change of tracks, tyres or difficulty levels here, I had only to decide on which track to race? There are five to choose from, all in ascending levels of difficulty; Offroad, North, South, East, and West. Having selected the offroad route, the easiest track, I prepared to start the action proper.

Clambering into my new all-terrain automobile I quickly scanned the controls; a map depicting my route and charting my progress was positioned in the top left hand corner, in the centre of the screen a gear lever marked high and low, and beneath that a clock that seemed quite content to tick away to itself. To the right my speed and ever-rising score merrily blinked at me.

Pushing my joystick forward prompted the buggy to lurch forward, gathering speed. The car's controls proved to be very simple: forward and back representing acceleration and braking; left

and right the steering; while the fire button toggled between the gears. Now the game instructions clearly state that the action takes place against the clock. The tracks are divided into different legs, all being about the same distance. The driver is given sixty seconds to complete each gruelling section, and may be awarded bonus time for any outstanding seconds remaining. Notwithstanding these facts, the player must complete each leg in order to carry on the race.

The track itself is divided into three lanes and, depending on the route you choose, the scenery changes - snow in the north, palm trees in the south. Apart from these differences the game's elements remain constant on each road. The most common items encountered are the coloured point-scoring flags. Collecting these awards the player thirty points and, if they are collected in the correct combination, offer a further bonus. Slalom-style gates are also found and driving through these will either give the corresponding score or will award a time bonus. For each time bonus obtained the player is awarded an extra two seconds on the next leg.

Further obstacles to be encountered all prove to be a hindrance to the driver. Simple obstructions, such as, boulders and barriers are to be avoided at all costs as contact with these makes your poor buggy flip up and roll. Puddles and plants reduce the speed of your vehicle on contact. Single-track bridges and dark, winding tunnels require careful steering - one false move and precious seconds can be lost. Giant logs are also found liberally scattered around the track and hitting these makes your buggy take off, thus avoiding any other would-be obstructions. Driving on two wheels can be performed by hitting a

small rock or tree stump. This clever act allows more accuracy when steering, especially between densely-packed boulders. As the game progresses, extra road features appear. Banking allows the buggy to bypass many obstacles, and passes, like tunnels, require a higher level of control.

STA

STA
Rating

83%

GRAPHICS: 77%
SOUND: 63%

ORIGINALITY: 75%
ADDICTIVENESS: 86%

DIFFICULTY: AVE-HARD
1ST DAY SCORE: 81000

I was a great fan of Buggy Boy in the arcades and I still push a couple of 10p's through its coin slot if I see one. Thus, I was a bit doubtful as to how well it would convert. Well, I am pleased to say that Elite have definitely surpassed themselves and come up with a near-perfect conversion.

All of the basic addictiveness of its arcade parent is here, along with its large, bold and colourful graphics. The buggy is superbly animated and its trundles, leans and bounces are a joy to watch.

I cannot help but recommend this game as it will appeal to old and young gamers alike, due to its simplicity and playability.

SM

Despite its rather basic graphics and humble sound, Buggy Boy does have those two most important ingredients - playability and the 'one-more-go' factor. I thoroughly enjoyed the game despite becoming quite frustrated when just failed to complete a leg. Make sure, however, you have a comfortable joystick, because that constant movement certainly cramped my hand. Overall, Buggy Boy is a rare species, a fun-to-play but well-implemented race game. It may not be too awe-inspiring but it certainly deserves a place in my software collection.

NC

CHOPPER-X

MASTERTRONIC (£9.95)

Can Mastertronic's Chopper X manage to take off amidst the down-draught of last month's A1 game, Microprose's Gunship?

Firstly, I must point out that Chopper X is not another helicopter simulation, any company trying to compete against Gunship must have lost their tail rotor. Mastertronic's offering is yet another vertical scrolling shoot-'em-up. The game's background sounds very similar to those of other historic battles. In a last-ditch attempt, your commanders have decided to storm the enemy base at Dang Ban Fu. But, before your infantry have any chance of success, you must first neutralize the enemy defences. As the cruel winter draws near you realize that time is short for the mission to be carried out. Stepping into your Heward XX66 assault helicopter, the army's latest piece of hardware, you remember your squadron's motto, "Glory or Death".

The first thing that struck me about Chopper X was the soundtrack played while the program was loading. The tune seemed quite catchy and was

extremely well implemented; further inspection of the inlay-card confirmed my suspicions that the sound was midi-compatible. Loading completed, the screen displayed a well-drawn picture of your XX66 chopper surrounded by the German programmer's credits.

The action itself starts at the beginning of the enemy's territory. Armed solely with twin air-to-ground cannon your craft slowly makes its way forward

into the enemy lines. One point to notice is the speed at which the rotor blades travel - realistically the helicopter should never become airborne. The first opposition encountered is from strategically positioned tanks, their diagonal fire causing a minor irritation. Further distractions on the first level include, gun emplacements, squad cars, and gun boats. Later levels introduce more densely-packed opposition and even air attacks from jet fighters.

At the end of each level your chopper is refuelled ready to take on the next sector. Should you be unfortunate enough to be shot down, your chopper is an-



STA Rating
52%

GRAPHICS: 41%
SOUND: 60%

ORIGINALITY: 55%
ADDICTIVENESS: 45%

DIFFICULTY: EASY-AVE
1ST DAY SCORE: 5250

noyingly transported to the start of the current level. To aid your cause, there are a number of Red-Cross tents. Flying over these supposedly neutral tents provides your chopper with cluster bombs; activated by the spacebar, these bombs destroy all the enemy emplacements on the screen.

Chopper X is a rather easy, vertical-scrolling shoot-'em-up. Graphically and sonically the game is very pleasing, although sometimes a little basic. For a low-priced budget game, I feel Chopper X is a worthwhile effort. Interesting.

WARHAWK

SILVERBIRD (£9.95)

Warhawk, would you believe, is yet another vertically-scrolling aerial assault shoot-'em-up. But do not be disconcerted by that, or by the fact that it is a Telecomsoft Silverbird budget game. Admittedly, it is unoriginal and cheap, which are not ideal qualifications for a computer game, but as a mindless and vacuous shoot-'em-up, it serves the purpose quite adequately. At first sight, Warhawk is uninspiringly

typical of existing titles. After selecting whether to control the game with mouse or joystick, both of which offer responsive control, the game screen appears accompanied by a frantic arcade tune. You are introduced to your double-cannon assault craft as it travels through a tunnel unaided.

At the other end of the tunnel, pressing the firebutton initiates your control over the

craft. The screen scrolls slowly and relentlessly across a changeable terrain which moves from a space environment to expanses of squares that are supposed to represent ground bases. In true arcade tradition, the aim is to gain as many points as possible through the destruction of ground bases and the annihilation of the variform alien craft that pursue the Warhawk every inch of the way. The Warhawk itself and all of the enemy are separately animated from the scrolling screen, which compensates for the somnolent pace of the scrolling. Additionally, the Warhawk can be moved anywhere on screen and the formation and speed of the alien craft are more varied.

Recently, in aerial assault games, it has become popular to intercept objects in order to modify their weaponry. Warhawk's single-shot cannon, however, remains the same throughout the game, but it is quite adequate for the task in hand. Rapid firebutton pressing is required to annihilate the squadrons of alien craft, and satisfying gaping holes signify the destruction of ground bases. The enemy fire heat-seeking missiles and explosives which slowly deplete the Warhawk's six energy shields. Alien craft give

way to asteroids and green globules and, finally, a large mothership awaits at the end of each level to thwart your promotion to the next screen.

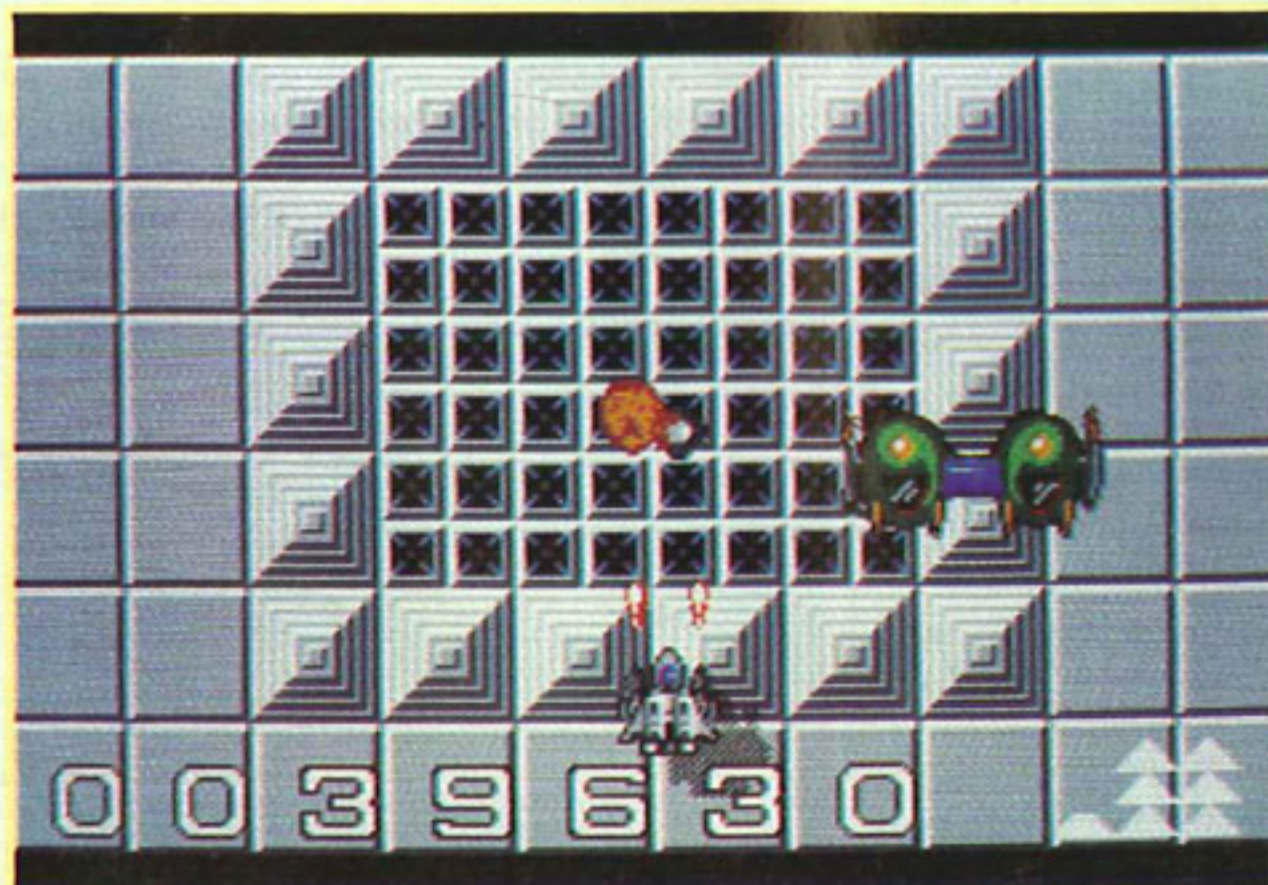
As described, Warhawk is a typical shoot-'em-up, which is more enjoyable than it is challenging to play. The seasoned game player will soon overcome its limited challenge and grow tired of it. Given a greater opposition, this game would have been one of the best aerial assault games available.

STA Rating
46%

GRAPHICS: 53%
SOUND: 40%

ORIGINALITY: 30%
ADDICTIVENESS: 50%

DIFFICULTY: EASY
1ST DAY SCORE: 50000



Looks like this could be a very lucky break, as three balls charge towards pockets



POOL

MASTERTRONIC (£9.99)

"There have been a number of attempts to simulate both snooker and pool but, for obvious reasons, none have proved a satisfactory substitute for the real thing."

Mastertronic's Pool is billed as a totally accurate simulation, but does its game play live up to its boast? Fifteen pool balls are arranged in a triangle at the head of the table; of these, seven are spots, as many again are stripes and one is a black eight ball. Depending on whether the first ball that you pot is a stripe or a spot, the aim is to sink all seven of that specific set and, finally, try for the eight ball. Of course, if you pot the eight ball while there are still

some of your set on the table, you instantly lose the match. Play can continue uninterrupted until a foul shot is committed for example: if the cue ball fails to make contact with another ball; you inadvertently hit or pot your opponent's ball or you sink the cue ball. Whoever commits one of these faults, the opponent duly gains two free shots.

Selecting whether to play an opponent or against the computer is the only choice that you have to make at the beginning of the game. The game screen is typical of existing titles, comprising an overhead view of the table with the triangle of pool balls at the right and the cue ball located in the D at the other end. Whether you are playing against the computer or an opponent, you alternately play the table until, as described, you commit a foul shot or fail to sink a ball. In addition to the white cue ball, a so-called ghost cue ball, which can be moved anywhere on the table, acts as your aiming point and also as a countdown for each shot. Clicking the mouse button starts the clock and, within the allotted ten seconds, you must place the ghost ball where you want the cue ball to travel and click the mouse button once more.

This activates a player's eye-view of the table, replacing the overhead table view. This screen shows the cue moving back and forth across the player's hand and in the top left-hand corner of the

A computer screen and joystick could not be any further removed from a pool table and cue, and so Mastertronic's Pool must be judged with these limitations in mind. The secondary screen, which shows the player's eye-view is effective, but you do have to remember the shot from the table screen, which could be likened to playing the game blindfold. Nevertheless, the game-play is kept flowing with the timed shots and the snappy game directions. Until now, there have been many poor interpretations of both snooker and pool and, in my opinion, Mastertronic's Pool is superior to any pool game available for the ST.

JS

My experience with computer pool and snooker games has not been a happy one. Both games have been too involved or they have seemed to be a case of "pot luck". Mastertronic's Pool, however, is the clearest definition of a pool game I have ever encountered. The mouse control is well thought out and the sound effects are well administered. My only real criticism concerns the computer opponent; in the past, I have found computer controlled opponents to be too accurate. This dummy, however, is not too bright - I managed to beat him nearly every time! Overall, Pool is a worthwhile game (the lower price helping to swing the vote) but it is best enjoyed with a friend

NC

screen, six Power and Spin bars increase and decrease with the position of the cue. Remembering the current shot from the overhead table screen, you must gauge the correct power and spin to apply to the cue ball. To achieve the correct spin, the end of the cue can be manipulated with the controls; for example, backspin is achieved by moving the tip of the cue to the base of the cue ball, while the power of the shot is governed by how far the cue is from the cue ball when you click the mouse button. When you are satisfied with the power and spin for that specific shot, a further click freezes all of the slider bars and the overhead view of the table returns to the screen. The cue ball then travels with the power and spin that you have just designated for the shot.



STA
Rating
63%

GRAPHICS: 66%
SOUND: 40%

ORIGINALITY: 43%
ADDICTIVENESS: 55%

DIFFICULTY: AVERAGE
1ST DAY SCORE: N/A

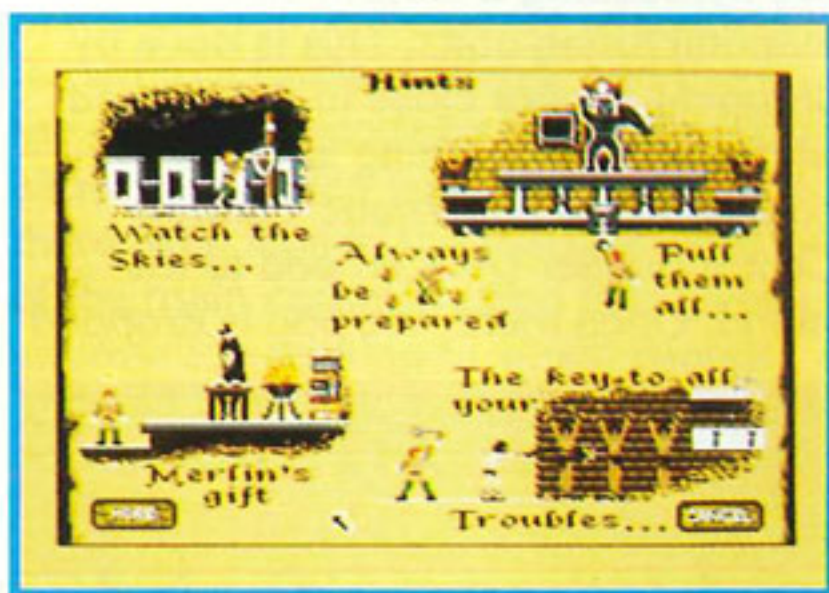


DARK CASTLE

MIRRORSOFT (£24.95)

"Situated on the top of a desolate hill lies the Dark Castle, home of the infamous Black Knight! Can you, a lowly peasant, survive fourteen gruelling levels and topple this tyrannical ruler? Are you a hero? Or are you history?"

Mirrorsoft have managed to clinch the



rights to this already much talked-about game - followers of which will know about its success on the Mac. ST owners now have their turn to pit their wits against the Black Knight's evil army. The game is presented on three disks (obviously a mega game here!) and, after the initial loading is complete, the player is presented with a rather intricate options menu. Before launching myself straight into the game I decided to review the introduction screens. These depicted the various actions that can be performed by your character and also provided one or two useful hints. Being a mere beginner in the art of evil knight bashing, I selected the easiest level and ventured forth. The castle's drawbridge crashed down and summoned me in.

Once inside the castle I found myself standing in a rather airy hall, out of

which led four separate exits. Having selected one I ran towards it, and probably to my impending doom. Whether the choice of exit matters is questionable; I found all four routes equally difficult. Having passed through my chosen portal the game itself started. My character had shrunk as had the other objects but now the screen was littered with both useful objects and less helpful adversaries. The gameplay itself seems to be a type of obstacle course, the player having to work his way from right to left whilst avoiding any oncoming traffic. I thought the game had undertones of the old Hunchback games and my hunch (sic.) proved correct with the appearance of the obligatory swinging ropes.

Having to perform numerous running jumps and leaps is not the only worry for our intrepid would-be hero. The castle seems to be infested with rats and bats, not to mention the gargoyles and dragons! To help avoid these creatures

Now here's a game that I've waited a long time for! Dark Castle has finally made its transition from the Mac to the ST and, quite frankly, I'm not impressed. Sure enough, the graphics and sound are good but the controls are terrible. Trying to use the joystick, mouse and the keyboard all simultaneously is hard enough. But just try it when you're hanging from a rope and being attacked by killer bats - impossible! Also, where is the informative manual giving me all the info on the game? A simple fly-sheet is quite inadequate! My interest waned after only half-an-hour and I for one would be most annoyed at having payed out twenty-five pounds for this game.

NC

The blurb on the packaging of Mirrorsoft's Dark Castle says: 'can you survive..' The finishing touch, for me, has to be '... the boredom?' This game is a real dodo. Granted, the load-up screen and selection screens are very prettily drawn and the sampled music is good, but the fact is, behind all the gloss and pretty pictures, the game is simply a platform game, and not a good one at that. The controls are horrendously difficult to come to terms with and this, combined with the extreme slowness, makes it an infinitely forgettable game. Thumbs down!

MM

STA Rating
60%

GRAPHICS: 81%
SOUND: 80%

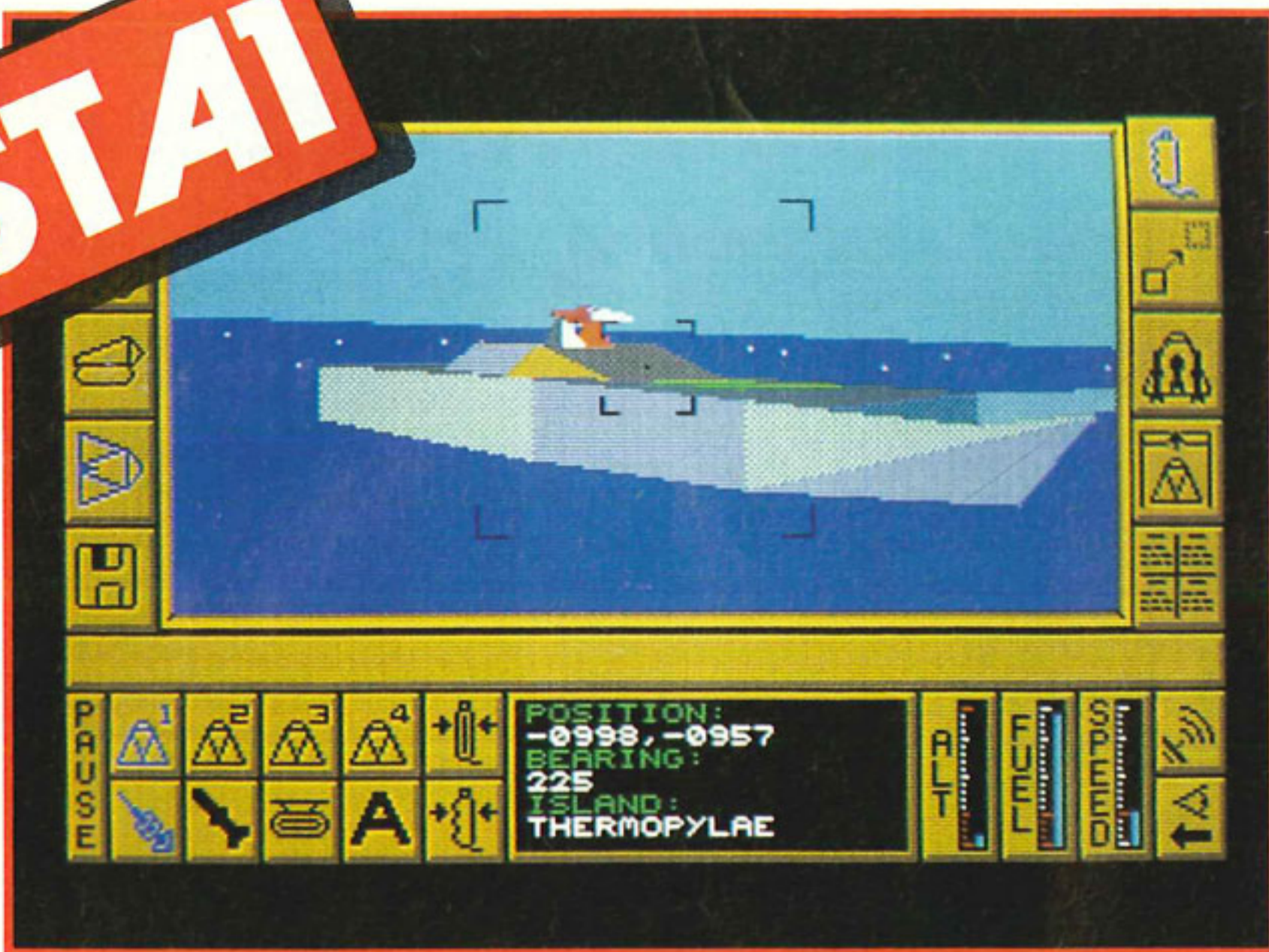
ORIGINALITY: 70%
ADDICTIVENESS: 40%

DIFFICULTY: HARD
1ST DAY SCORE: 3500

(and probably earn a bit on the side from Rentokil), we are supplied with a sack of rocks. Carefully lobbing these at any oncoming killer will ensure their swift demise. Players should be warned, however, that these supplies are not endless. If you should manage to find yourself without any odd lumps of concrete only the discovery of further boulders will enable you to continue your carnage. Both rat and bat bites can turn septic very quickly, therefore bottles of life-saving elixir can be found hidden in murky corners of the castle.

As the game progresses it becomes obvious that it is really nothing more than a glorified platform game. Each progressive screen presents new problems, as if the bats and rats weren't enough! Cross-bow-firing monsters, wicked wizards, horrible henchmen, moving and disappearing platforms - they're all here! Aurally and visually the game is very pleasing and some nice features have been included, such as the routine our hero performs after a minor fall. The little fellow sways as if in a drunken stupor (whilst making the corresponding noises) then he pulls himself together and shakes his head - quite amusing! There does, however, appear to be one major design fault. The controls are arguably the hardest to be found on a computer. Rock throwing is operated via the mouse; actions from the keyboard; and movement via either the joystick or the keyboard! Maybe the game should include an extra arm attachment.

STAI



accompanying hefty mission briefing and operations manual is simple enough. It is June 2166 and there has been a successful attempt at finding fossil fuels and essential industrial metals, the rarest commodities in the modern world, by one of your Fuel Hunters in an area of numerous volcanic islands in the Southern Ocean. The plan was for two secret Aircraft Carriers to work from opposite sides of the island archipelago and gradually 'populate', with industrial mining and construction complexes, all the islands within a two-year period.

Unfortunately, one of the carriers, the ACC Omega, has fallen under the control of STANZA, an enemy organisation, and is currently gaining control of the islands for the enemy. Your task is to populate as many islands as possible, thus slowing the enemy's rate of progress and then fight tooth and nail for victory.

To aid you in your task you have four Manta aircraft and four amphibious assault vehicles (AAV) under player control at any one time. You may have more than this number in stores as a back-up, but you will find that keeping track of up to eight separate vehicles, as well as looking after your carrier, is more than most people's brains (combined with the associated mouse movements) can handle.

The idea behind colonising an island is not for you to say: 'This is my island', but to put the island to good use by building a control centre and/or manufacturing units. This is done by dropping anchor close to the desired island and despatching an AAV containing an Automatic Control Centre Builder (ACCB) pod to the island. Once there, the pod is dropped

CARRIER COMMAND

RAINBIRD (£24.95)

"Those of you who were tempted by luscious screen shots of Carrier Command in fabulous 3D solid graphics be warned - the images may be picturesque, but the strategy involved is awesome."

These may, indeed, be strong words but in this case they are justified. Rainbird have, with Carrier Command, come up with one of the most complex and rewarding war strategy games

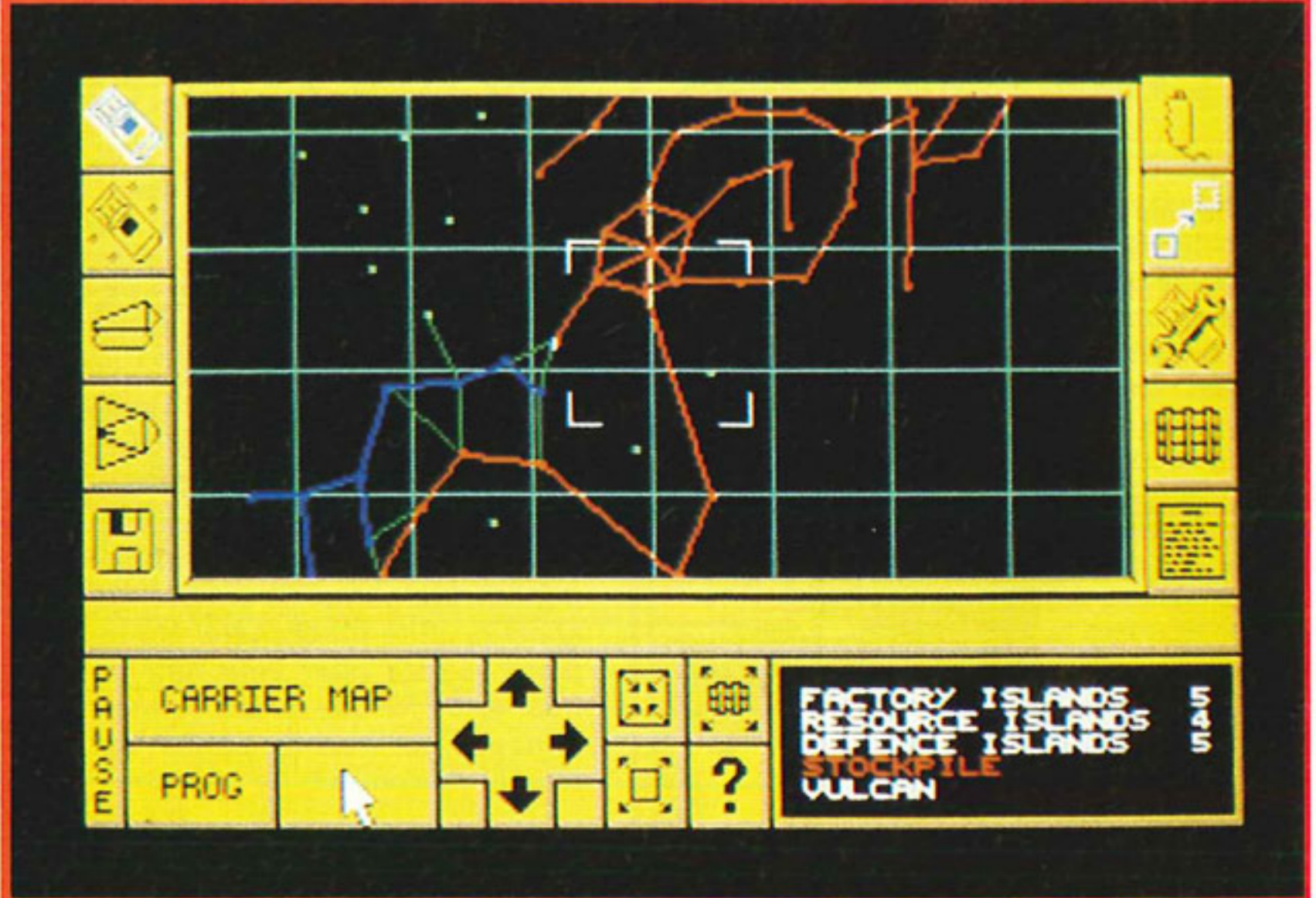
ever released for the ST. The scenario described in the

STA Rating
91%

GRAPHICS: 93%
SOUND: 75%

ORIGINALITY: 85%
ADDICTIVENESS: 87%

DIFFICULTY: AVERAGE
1ST DAY SCORE: 15000



The carrier map allows set courses for the Carrier, Mantas (planes) and Walruses (amphibious tanks), as well as locating supply Islands.

Wow!! gimme, gimme, gimme. Loads of fun, strategy, speed and excitement GREAT!!! Not many things can pull me away from my work for any length of time, but this masterpiece of software really hits the button with its smooth and consistent graphics, total vehicular control and abundant gadgets, (because you must have ALL the gadgets in an environment such as this, yeah yeah!!) Don't be deterred by the enormity of the manual, or the wealth of icons on the screen, it's great learning to use all of the equipment and goodies which are waiting to be flown, driven, crashed or thrashed. Buy, buy, buy - it's astoundingly good, sell all your old software to get it, even your computer..... O.K., a bit silly, but it IS good!!!

Greg'88

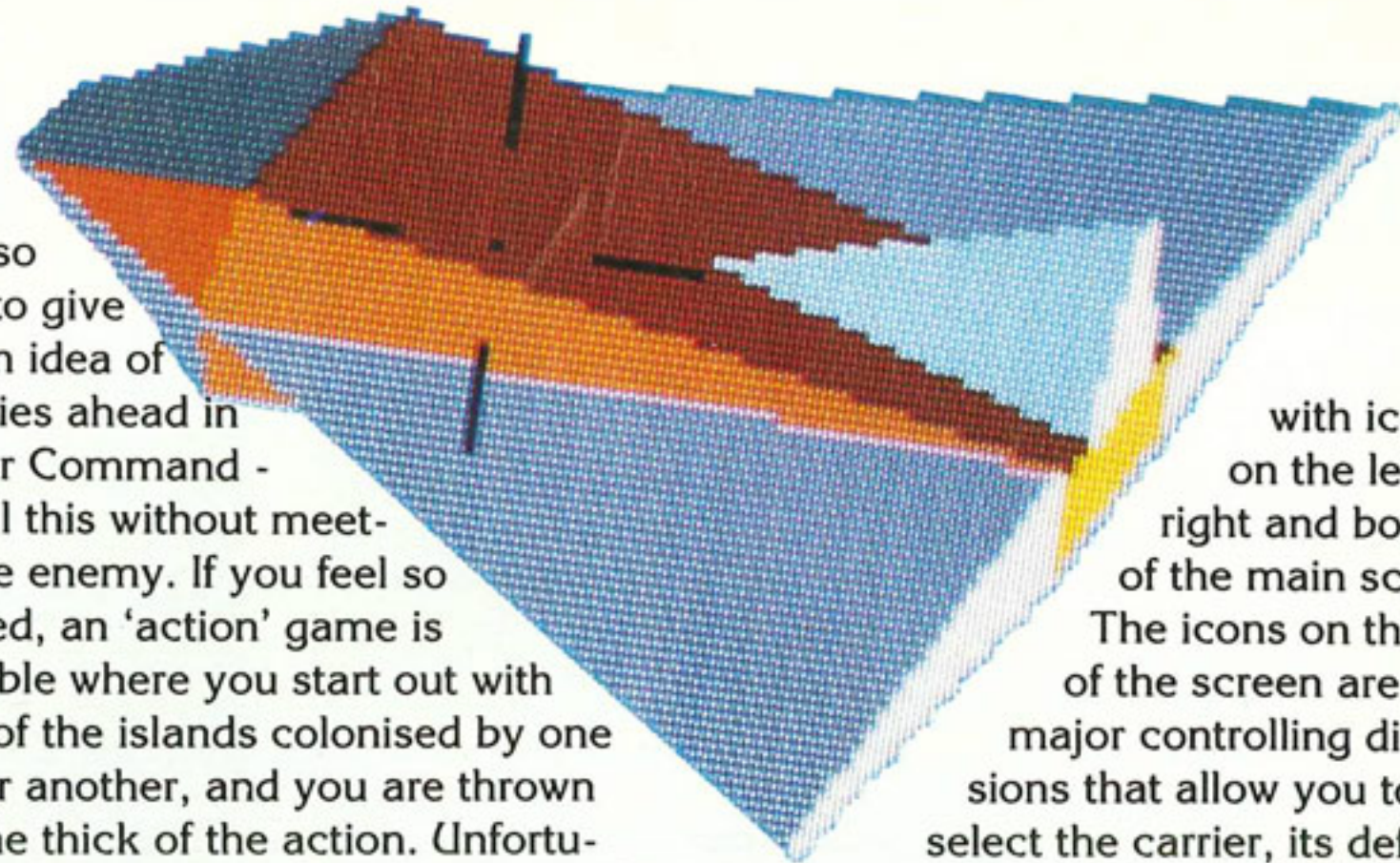
and a Command Centre is built which, in turn, instigates the building of the rest of the island's units. There are three types of ACCB that can be dropped: Defence (for protecting the rest of the network); Resource (for mining and refining raw materials), and Factory (where raw materials are used to manufacture equipment).

Most of the islands are linked together in a network, enabling raw materials from a Resource island to be ferried to a Factory island, and then the completed units to your ship. To allow you to plan your campaign, there is an icon in the map sub-section of the main carrier section that gives information relating to which islands are able to be networked.

The story so far is to give you an idea of what lies ahead in Carrier Command - and all this without meeting the enemy. If you feel so inclined, an 'action' game is available where you start out with most of the islands colonised by one side or another, and you are thrown into the thick of the action. Unfortunately, the game is of such magnitude that, so far, I am unable to cope with this alternative. It definitely is a case of learning to walk before you can run, and I plan to spend at least another couple of weeks on the strategy game before I can safely and comfortably control my carrier, all the allied islands, the supply network, and aircraft and AAVs, thus allowing me to attack the enemy without fear of losing hand over fist.

Pre-planning and being able to make rapid decisions on the move are vital if one is to get more than just a cursory 'play' at it. If Rommel had had this to practise on then El Alamein might have turned out differently!

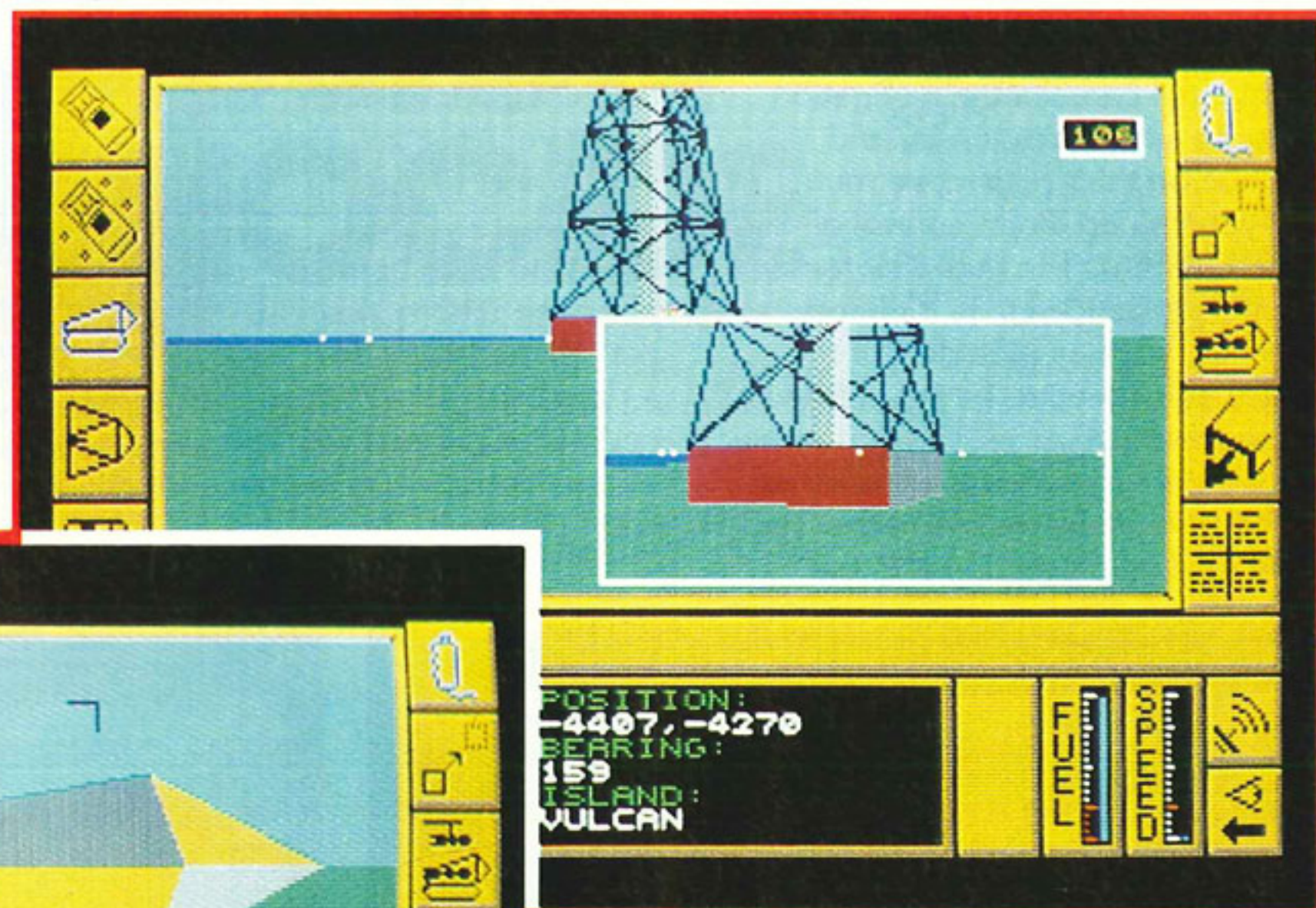
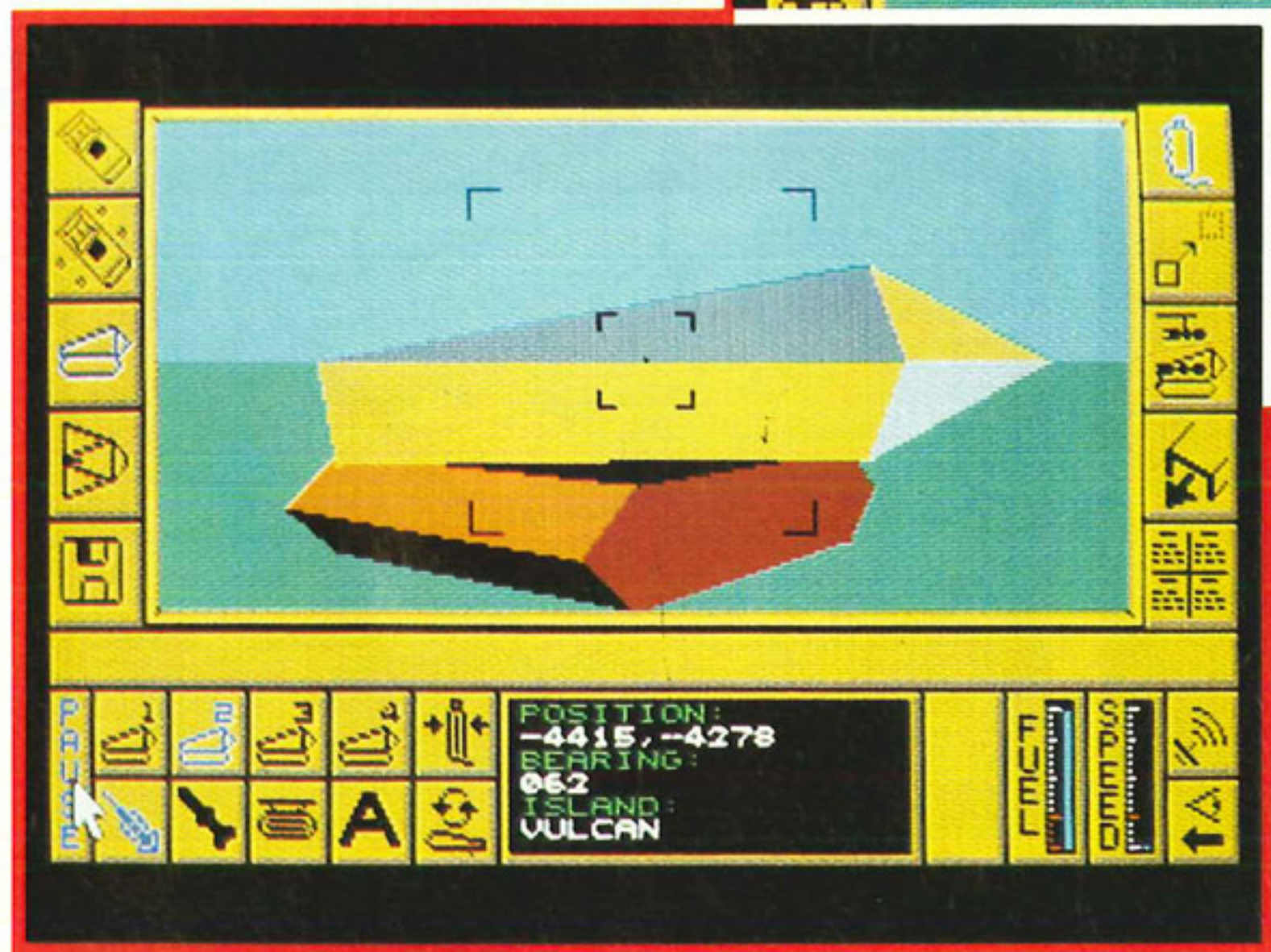
The entire game can be controlled by the mouse, although the joystick can also be used exclusively or partially. The screen is well laid out,



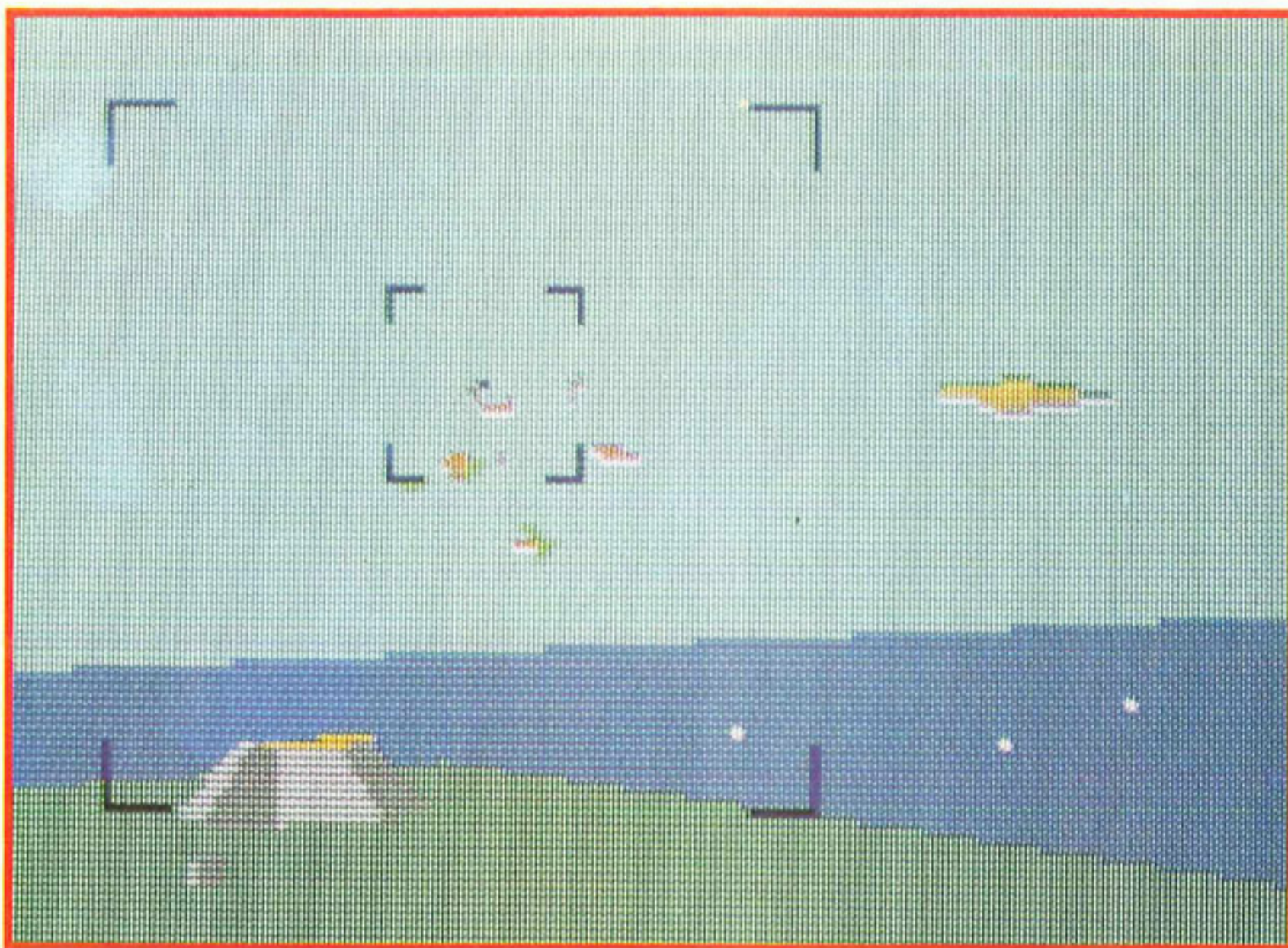
with icons on the left, right and bottom of the main screen. The icons on the left of the screen are the major controlling divisions that allow you to select the carrier, its defence system, the AAVs, the Manta

aircraft, or to save the game for another time. Your choice of this section governs what appears in the sub-section on the right-hand side of the screen. Therefore, for example, if you select the aircraft section on the left, the sub-section on the right would enable you to choose: direct control of the aircraft; aircraft navigation; arming, re-fuelling and repair; aircraft traffic control, and aircraft information. Each of these selections opens up new screens and so, as you can imagine, there can be times when, in order to keep control of two or three aircraft, three or four AAVs and the carrier with all its associated problems, lightning movements with the mouse are called for. Beware of scorchmarks on your mouse mat!

If you are wondering what



The shot on the left is of a Walrus as seen from another Walrus (the first is under auto pilot). Just seconds after the Walrus (under manual control) turns to fire at an enemy building. A missile is fired and wire guided to its target (photo above)



Your Manta fires a missile at an enemy plane. It connects and... kaboom he's history

Awesome! This game has me searching for more superlatives each time I play it. The sheer size of the game makes me wonder how they managed to fit it onto one single-sided disk. The graphics are superb and are very smooth in their movement. The detail with which everything is done is amazing. Take, for example, the fact that if you drive an AAV onto an island and set it spinning around its own axis, you can then take a Manta and fly down to the island and actually see the AAV rotating! That's what I call detail! As for the gameplay, I have literally spent days on this game and I reckon that it could be a month before I start to get really good. For action, strategy and value for money this has to be the best.

MM

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|----------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
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| JOYSTICK | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
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| COLOUR | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| MONO | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
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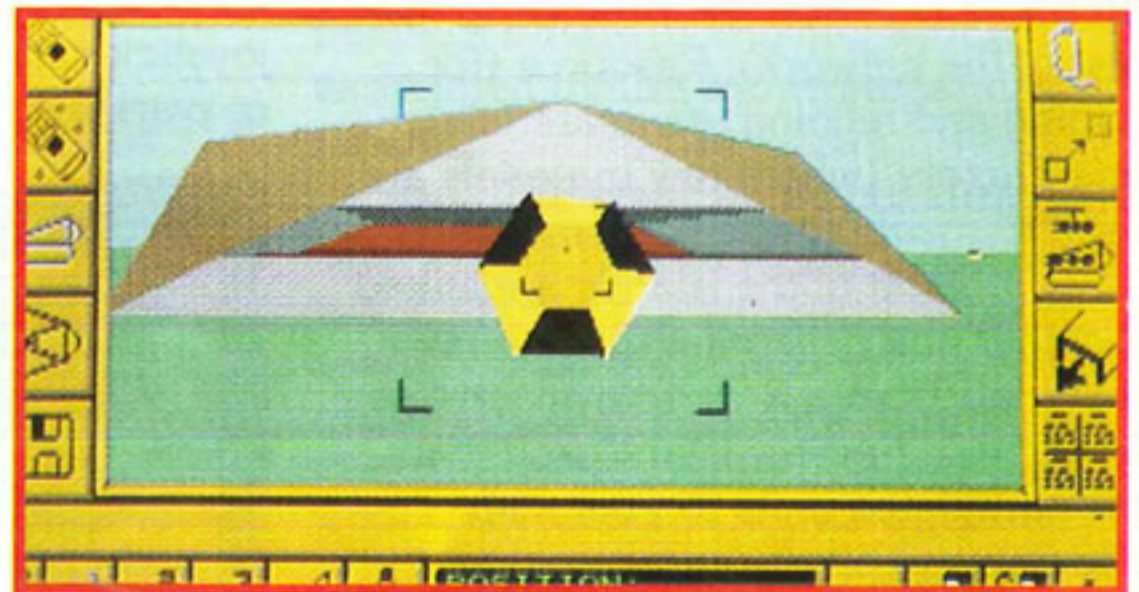
reporting system will tell you when, say, Manta 4 has reached its destination. Manta 4 will then circle around that point in a holding pattern until either you set another destination on the autopilot, take control of the aircraft yourself, or the aircraft runs out of fuel.

To take over an enemy island, you have to shoot a 'virus bomb' from an AAV into the enemy command centre. This then infiltrates the enemy's computer and takes over control of all the resources or factories on the island and puts them under your control. However, to get to the situation where you can shoot the virus bomb, you have first to 'take out' all the island defences with your Mantas, ship's laser or AAVs equipped with missiles or lasers. Not quite so simple after all, eh?

proved to be a very short space, to give you an insight as to the enormity of the gameplay in Carrier Command. I have still not covered half of what I

happens to all the aircraft and tanks when you are seeing to the needs of the ship, well fear not. All the AAVs and Mantas can, via the navigation icons, be set onto autopilot and continue on their respective routes until you call up direct control of each of them in turn. The autopilot feature is quite sophisticated as it enables variables, such as altitude (for the Manta) and speed to be set before and during the trip.

All of your support vehicles can be tracked by means of the map in the navigation section and the

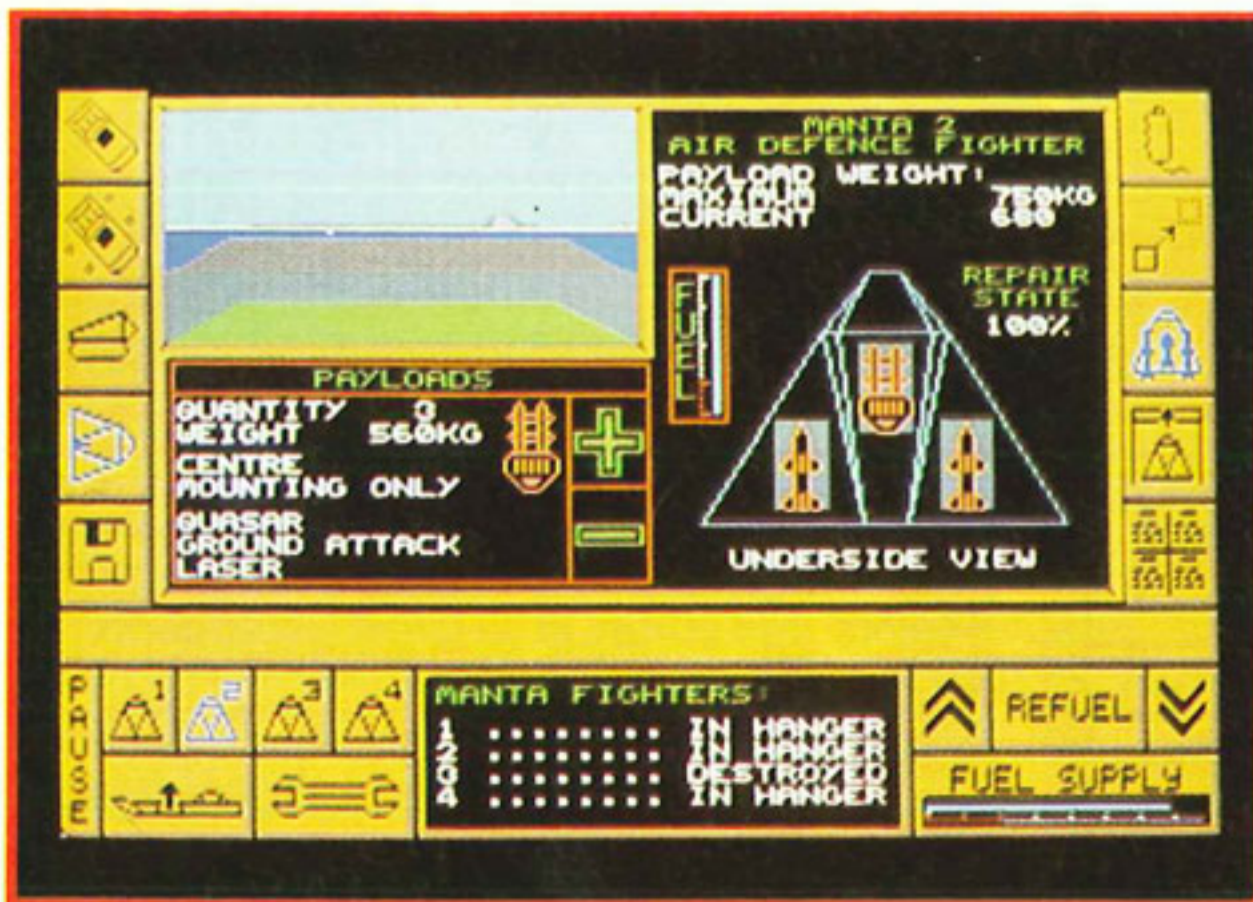


Lobbing a virus bomb from your Walrus into an enemy HQ

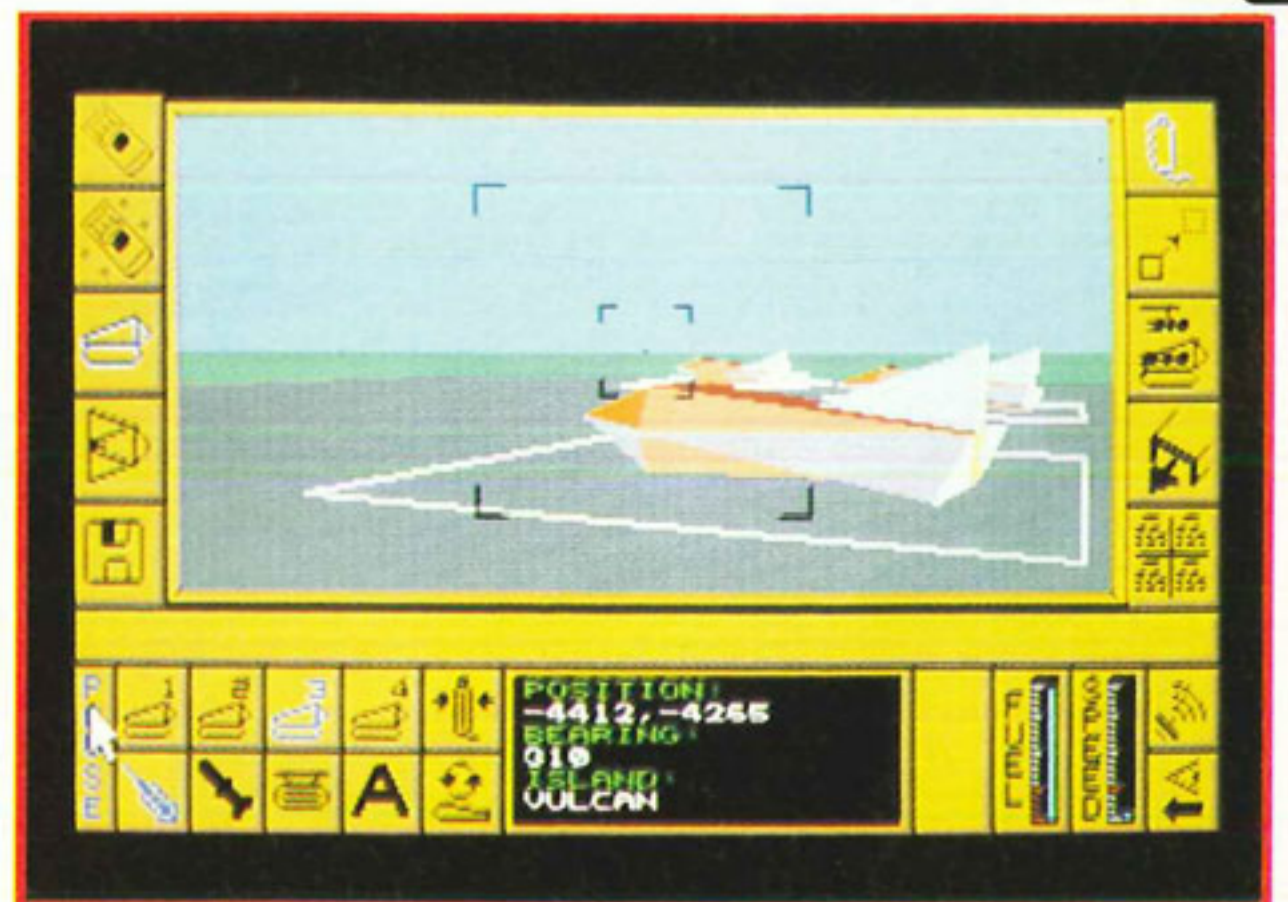
would like to, but suffice it to say that no stone has been left unturned by the programmers in an effort to bring what has turned out to be one of the few 'masterpieces' of software to the ST.

I have attempted, in what has

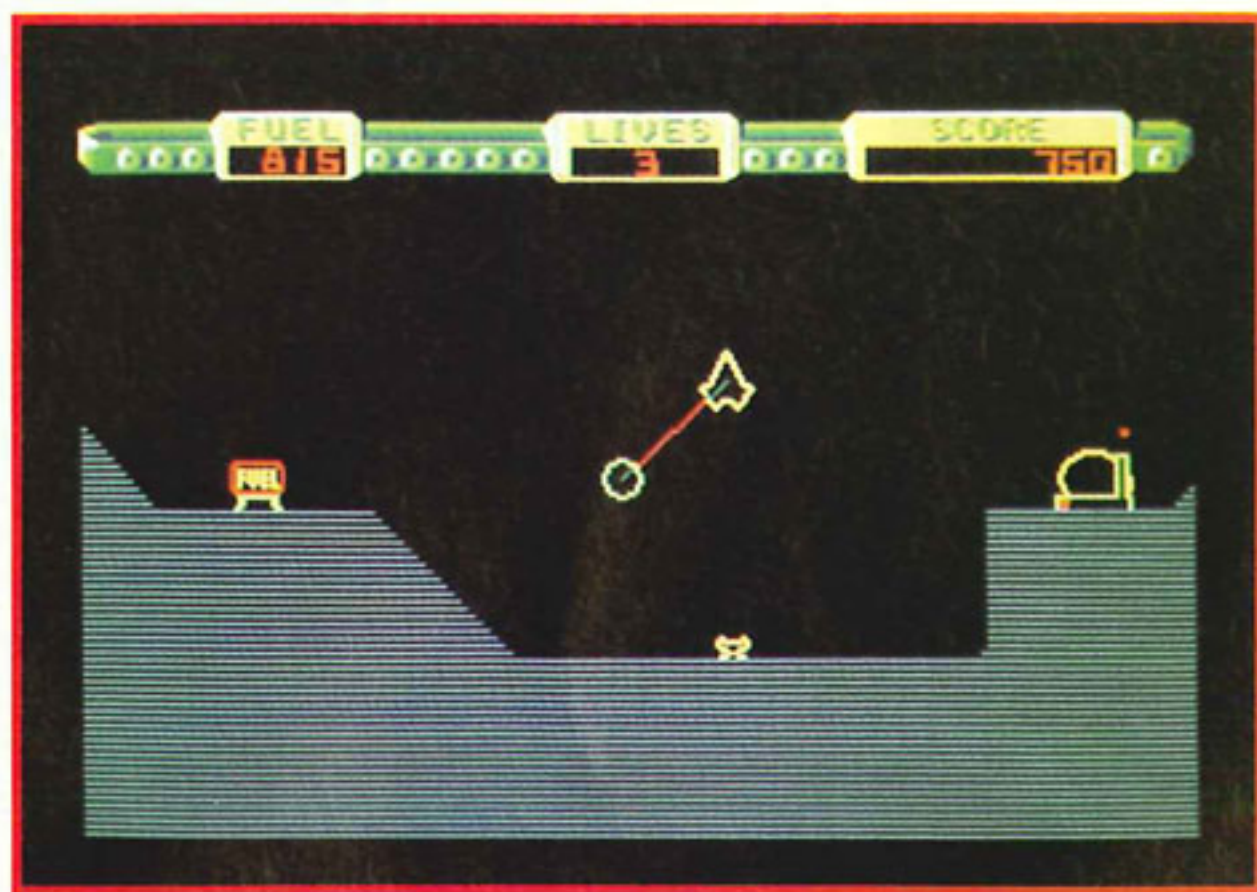
STA



Arming the Manta takes a fair bit of thought in order to cram in enough missiles, lasers and bombs without taking the plane over the weight limit.



After capturing an Island you can set up HQ and use the captured runway to operate your Mantas from.



THRUST

■ ■ ■ SILVERBIRD (£9.95) ■ ■ ■

The resistance is about to launch a major offensive against the Intergalactic Empire - an all too familiar scenario! The main challenge in Thrust's game-play is the awkward jet thrust propulsion system, which was first introduced in Asteroids. Like the vessel in Asteroids, this triangular craft can be rotated a complete 360 degrees clockwise by pressing the 'A' key and anticlockwise with the adjacent 'S' key. Forward movement is

achieved by pressing the Shift key and the distance that you want the craft to travel can be regulated by how long you maintain pressure on the key.

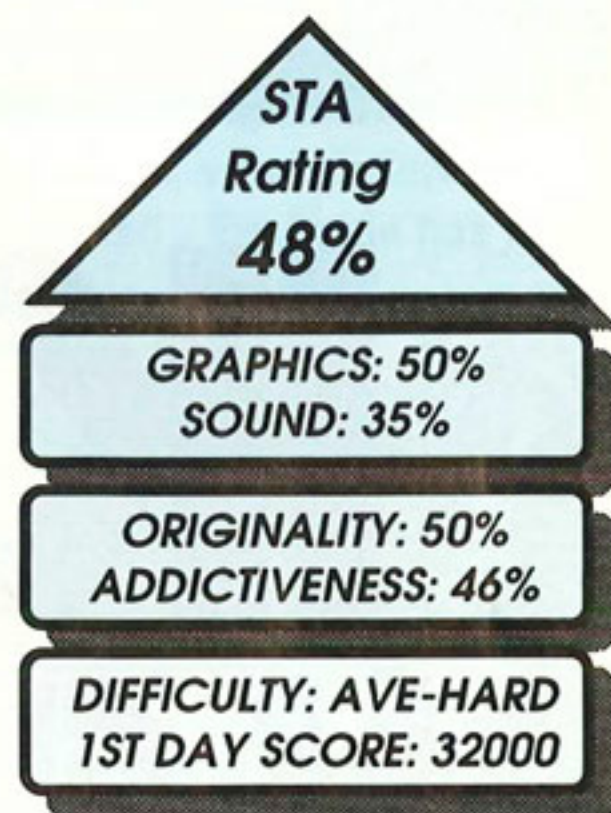
The story continues to describe how several enemy battleships have been captured. Apparently, however, the rebels have neglected to pilfer the essential power sources and so your task is to collect the fuel for these craft. These so-called Klystron Pods are attached to a

ground-based storage building on the enemy planet. A battalion of Limpet guns defend the planet and concentrate their attack around the Klystron Pods. The enemy defence is powered by nuclear bases, which can be temporarily disabled with missiles from your single-shot cannon. If you have a finger spare, pressing the Return key activates the cannon and the more shots you fire at the nuclear base, the longer the guns are disabled. You must, however, regulate the amount of fire at the plant as it becomes 'critical' and you have just ten seconds to evacuate the planet before it explodes.

The planet has a powerful gravity which constantly draws the craft to the ground. The craft comes to grief immediately it comes into contact with the ground. However, you must first locate the building that houses the Klystron Pod, which is indicated by a large sphere. Once the craft nears the pod, pressing the space bar adheres it to the craft via a long Tractor Beam. This Tractor Beam also collects fuel resources which boost your fuel levels during the game. With the Pod in tow, you must continue your journey across the planet. The added weight of the Pod upsets the balance of the craft and increases the already difficult task of negotiating a safe passage across the hazardous terrain. Your only protection

against colliding with the planet is afforded by a momentary protection shield, which is activated by pressing the space bar. 2000 Bonus points can be won by collecting the Klystron Pod, attacking the nuclear base to 'critical' level and evacuating the planet in time.

The terrain moves from planet surface to tricky caverns and passageways and the combination of the awkward directional controls, the system of propulsion and the Klystron Pod, which impedes the craft's progress like a ball and chain around an escaped convict's ankle, makes this one of the most infuriating games I have ever played. The question is: what should you expect for £9.95? Certainly more than Thrust has to offer!



This is one of two vertically-scrolling shoot'em ups available on the budget Silverbird label. Mission Genocide is graphically less appealing than Warhawk, but the game-play is more varied. Your objective, as usual, is to gain as many points as possible through the destruction of ground bases, avoiding a flow of enemy craft which rain from the top of the screen in a variety of formations. The assault craft is separately animated from the screen and can be moved anywhere within the visible area. The scrolling speed is not affected by the game-play and continues at a slow and constant pace throughout the game. Both your assault craft and the enemy can move faster than the scrolling.

MISSION GENOCIDE

■ ■ ■ SILVERBIRD (£9.95) ■ ■ ■

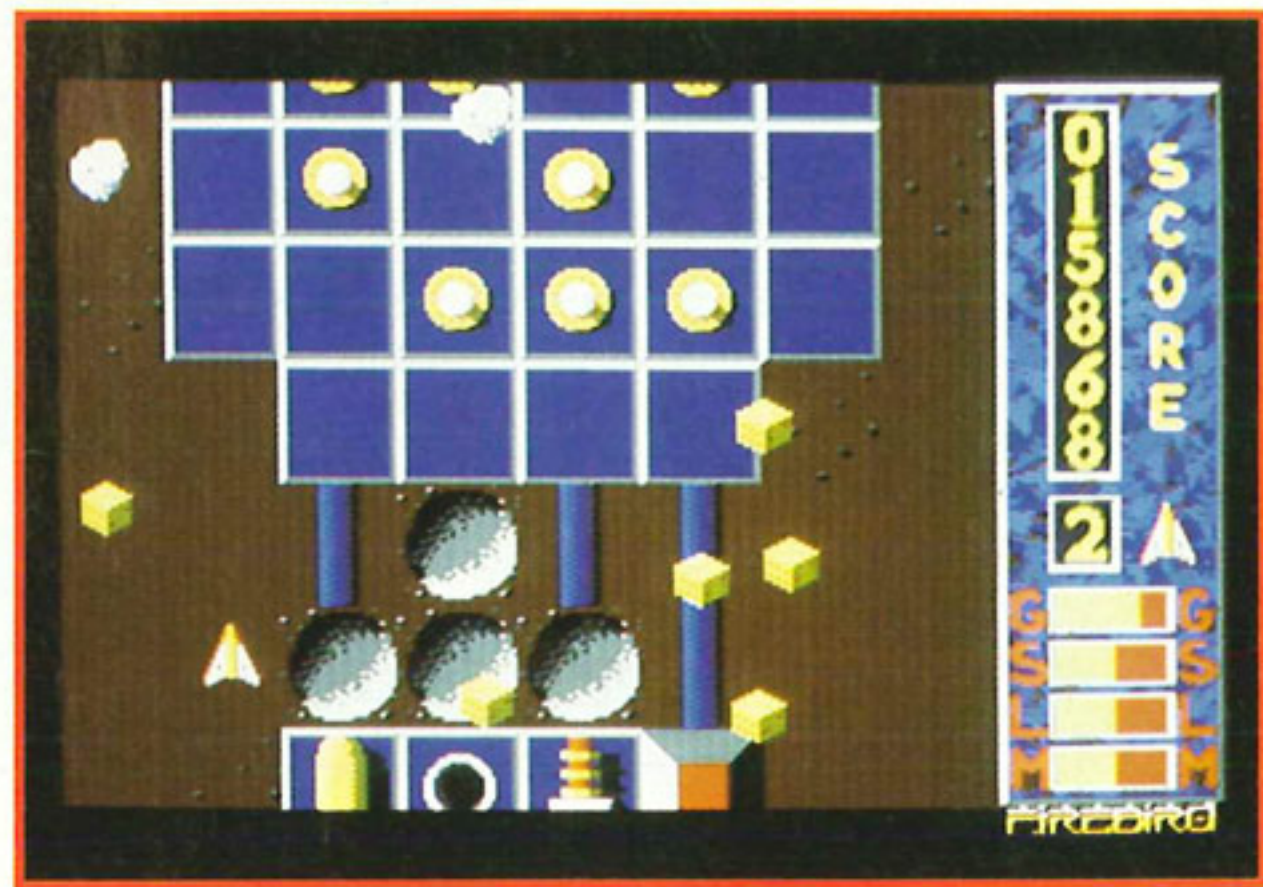
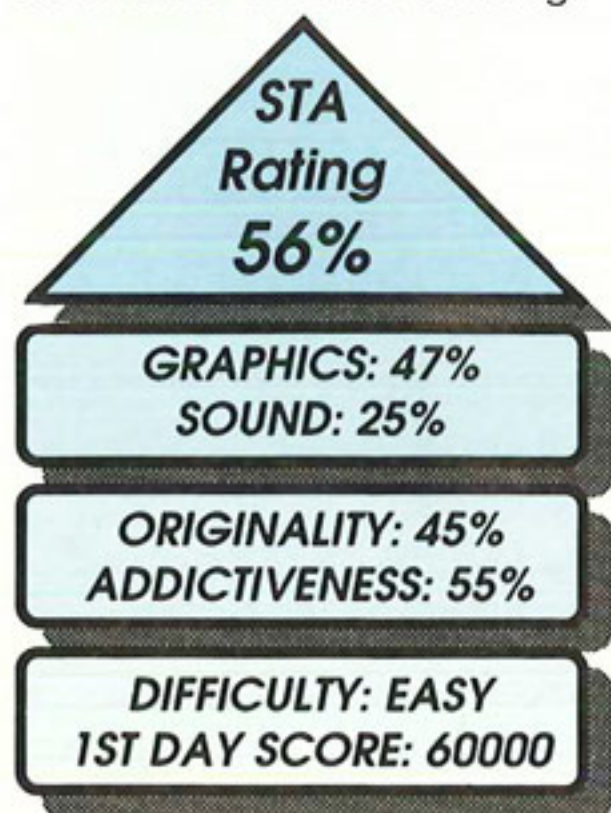
The joystick affords full and responsive control, although you cannot reverse the craft to blast something that you have missed. The double-action weaponry responds according to how you press the fire button. A quick single blast launches a single missile and continuously holding the firebutton down activates lighter-gauge ammunition. Additionally, pressing Return activates auto-fire, which enables you to concentrate on launching the missiles at the ground installations, ground bases and storage silos that cover the terrain. Each silo contains ammunition and weaponry, which can be looted by blasting the silo and flying over the top to collect the supplies.

The weaponry will only adhere itself to the assault craft if you have picked up a supply of so-called Astro-Glue which is found in the occasional silo. However, some of the silos must be avoided as they contain black

holes with anti-matter that destroys the adhesiveness of the Astro-Glue. When they are destroyed, a gaping hole in the roof of the silo reveals the contents. The opposition begin their defence with a mass of diamond-shaped asteroids that force you to manoeuvre the craft away from the silos. The terrain scrolls

relentlessly onwards to reveal a constant and ever-changing group of enemy craft, some equipped with weaponry others swarming across in formations like cannon-fodder.

Vertically-scrolling shoot'em ups are already in abundance and so I am constantly amazed at the percentage of releases that add to this most prolific subject. Mission Genocide cannot be described as innovative or original, the game-play is neither arduous nor taxing and the graphical presentation fails to inspire. This game simply offers arcade entertainment at a so-called budget price.



You've crash landed deep behind enemy lines in the jungle - now get out of that one!



I first met up with Ikari Warriors in a shady corner of a Sussex pub. After the initial excitement and several ten-pence pieces I dismissed the machine as yet another Commando clone. So, now we've met again and this time money is no object. Firstly, I must say that I expected better quality graphics, Ikari Warriors on the ST looks somewhat like an eight-bit game. The sound, too, is basic with the usual combat noises. Still, thinking back, the arcade coin-op looked pretty simple too! The gameplay itself is great fun, the characters are adequately drawn and the guerrillas do a lovely twirl when shot. One minor quibble I found was that the action slowed dramatically when the screen became full of gun-toting Rambos. In full, Ikari Warriors is a welcome addition to the ST's software catalogue - probably the best Commando-type game available.

NC

IKARI WARRIORS

ELITE (£19.95)

"If you are an eight-bit war veteran who saw action in the Commando campaign two years ago, you could be forgiven for mistaking Elite's Ikari Warriors for Rambo, (the game)."

Certainly, the main character is stripped to the waist to show his bulging pixels and he even has a nancy headband tethering his rather unmilitary haircut. But the similarities do not end there! Accessing the game causes initial loading problems as the option screen appears for no more than a few seconds before an unstoppable demo sequence of the terrain ensues. Pressing keys 1 or 2 selects how many players are participating in the game and an animation sequence shows a Mustang flying across the sky, losing height with engines ablaze

and crash-landing in the jungle.

Immediately, the game screen replaces the animation sequence to



You climb into a tank and suddenly the tables are turned!

show a Commando-style aerial view of a jungle terrain. Unaided, the Ikari warrior clammers across the wrecked plane's fuselage and continues to run until you pull back on the joystick to initiate your control over him. He can only be controlled with the joystick, and pushing forward sends him trotting vertically up the screen. As the character reaches the centre, the screen begins to scroll to reveal more of the terrain. Moving the joystick to

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| COLOUR | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| MONO | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 520ST | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 1040ST | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

the left and right sends him across the screen, although diagonals cannot be achieved. Therefore, as the weaponry is directly linked to the direction in which he is moving, its effectiveness is quite limited. The weaponry itself consists of a repeating rifle that has a range of no more than a third of the screen, although a seemingly limitless supply of devastating hand grenades clears the way ahead. The repeating rifle is activated by pressing the firebutton quickly, while a grenade can be thrown if you hold the firebutton down. Ammunition levels are indicated

on the status display above the screen and you begin the game well-equipped with 50 grenades and 99 rounds of ammunition. The score counter displays eight naughts and, considering that each enemy destroyed only yields single figure points, this could be a long war.

Accompanied by repetitive macho military music, enemy snipers

Originality has never been a word which figures strongly in the software industry's vocabulary and I can only describe Ikari Warriors as totally predictable. I likened the game to Rambo and Commando, which were popular on the Commodore 64 over two years ago. Both games, however, were superior to Ikari Warriors in every aspect. The game-play area is confined, the graphics are underwhelming and the controls annoyingly indistinct. Undoubtedly, the game-play is challenging, but this is due to the number of adversaries and their formations which make the game very one-sided.

JS

take position at the side of the screen in an attempt to waste a few of the eight lives that you are blessed with at the start of the game. All of the characters in the game shake violently when they sustain a hit, although your commando can endure a number of bullets before losing a life. Negotiating your way past a centrally located gun post requires a few strategically lobbed hand grenades. Occasionally, successful destruction of a gun post yields ammunition to replenish your weaponry, which can be collected by moving the character over the top. Snipers and gun posts give way to platoons of uniformed soldiers who march onto the screen and sporadically fire in all directions.

In addition to the replenishment of weaponry, you can take command of the occasional tank, which can be located with a large and subtle 'IN' sign flashing on its turret. As you move the commando over the top of the tank, he disappears inside the turret and the tank glows red to confirm that you now have control. The power afforded by the tank is short-lived and so you must utilize the time economically and cause as much destruction as possible. The terrain changes from desert to wooden foot-

STA Rating
56%

GRAPHICS: 49%
SOUND: 43%

ORIGINALITY: 48%
ADDICTIVENESS: 59%

DIFFICULTY: AVERAGE
1ST DAY SCORE: 24000

bridges which are stretched over small streams. Finally, a long pontoon bridge takes you to a stockade which must be destroyed - the battle has just begun! **STA**



As you approach a river bank, you find yourself attacked by a tank, a gun emplacement and some infantry. If only you'd been in two player mode! (inset)

TIME AND MAGIC

MANDARIN (£19.95)

"This trilogy contains three of the Level 9 Company's biggest adventure hits of recent years, revamped with graphics and more text.

The games are 'The Lords of Time', 'Red Moon' and 'The Price of Magik'. Each game is a complete adventure in its own right or you may play them individually."

'The Lords of Time' involves your search through 9 different time zones to collect the items necessary to defeat the evil Timelords. By climbing into an old grandfather clock you will be able to travel from the prehistoric past to the far future and carry the items located in each zone to solve the problems of the others. The time zones include Vikings, Cavemen, Dinosaurs, Robots and even the Tooth Fairy! The original version of the game used a very dodgy text parser which caused many amusing messages to be given. Commands such as 'DIG HOLE' could cause the reply, 'You can't see the beautiful narcissus standing by the muddy stream'. Which was strange as I never thought for a moment I could! Such obvious faults as this have now

The games may not be brand new, but if you missed them the first time round the chance to buy three for the price of one is certainly worth considering. Together they will, without doubt, fill your thoughts and wee small hours for many weeks.

Level 9 certainly love to drive you mad with their sprawling games and seemingly endless supply of rooms, but I confess I have begun to tire of making sense of these wonders of cartography. Whilst Lords of Time is the older of the games, and suffers from the dumber command interpreter, I found this the best of the bunch. The combat sequences in the latter games become a chore as you try in vain to guard your hit points from the endless supply of monsters who dog your every move. Red Moon has some nice text and the puzzles are fair, but the Price of Magik was too high for me and I wilted in the face of the endless diet of combat.

AM

been removed but the parser still remains a little dumb and you will still be required to hit the exact commands to carry out your wishes. A 'naughty' which exists concerns the rucksack. If you, 'Put the object in the rucksack', the game will say 'OK'. But it won't be OK, the object will be put on the ground where you can wander off and leave it. The game is big and involved but it shows its age.

'Red Moon' tells how the Red Moon Crystal, the only source of magik left, was lost and how you were selected to be the champion to recover it from the monster-infested castle where it now languishes. This game has the added interest of combat sequences with various nasties who range from giant rats to ghosts. To aid you in your battles the rooms and tunnels contain weapons of hard steel and others with magical properties. You may cast spells to find objects or influence your surroundings. There are healing potions to be bought and found and armour to help ward off the blows of your adversaries. Red Moon was an extremely popular game and won many awards, including Best Adventure of the Year. By this time the parser used by Level 9 had matured even more and the annoying niggles of the past are less in evidence. There is considerably more text in the room descriptions and, combined with the digitised graphic screens, the result is definitely on a par with more recent



games. Level 9 love to create confusing map layouts and each turn in the passage seems to uncover yet another tangle of NE, SW, SE and North passageways leading off into the gloom. If you like games which endlessly wend their way through spaghetti junctions and always need a bigger piece of paper than you could have believed possible, this will not disappoint.

And what is the 'Price of Magik'? It appears to be the same as the rewards for playing too many adventure games - MADNESS! You will begin the game 100% sane and feeling young. As your knowledge of magik grows you will slowly lose your sanity and grow old. After struggling with this game into the early hours, you may just come to believe it!

Once again you must brave the perils of a great house, which is riddled with passageways and monsters, in search of the fabled Red Moon crystal. Yet again, you must protect your sanity and hit-points from the range of creatures who hit with an endless supply of body blows. Yet again, there are endless numbers of twisting corridors leading to the Red Room and the Yellow Room and the Boulder Room etc. The format is very similar to the Red Moon game with its supply of weapons and magical items which you must master and defend yourself with. To compound your problems, each creature you dispatch appears to resurrect itself into a ghost version which is even more difficult to deal with. A true test for the dedicated hacker!

A big bonus with this trilogy is



You are in a ruined stone house, scarcely more than a heap of rubble, though a deep alcove survives in the remains of one overgrown wall. This house seems an ideal place to cache your loot. You can see an axe and a lamp.
What now? █

You are in a ruined stone house, scarcely more than a heap of rubble...

the text size option. At last they have incorporated commands to change the tiny text, which is unreadable on TV

showing how you may incorporate this option into old Level 9 games, such as Knight Orc and Gnome Ranger.

My old gran used to have a saying which went something like: "You can dress mutton to look like lamb, but it's still mutton". What, you may ask, has that to do with these games. Well, the three games that go to make up Time and Magik were all originally for 8 bit machines and have been spruced up for the ST. The sprucing includes the addition of pictures and enhanced command parser, but they are still essentially 8 bit games and don't make nearly full use of the power of the ST.

As I have said, the three games now have pictures the quality of which is a bit variable. There is a frame around each that looks quite sharp and clear, but the picture within the frame looks rather blurred - at least on my TV it does.

One point in their favour is that it is possible to vary the size of the text in order to make it more readable for those using a TV or whose eyesight is not good, (in my case both). Perhaps other writers of text adventure games should take note.

SJK

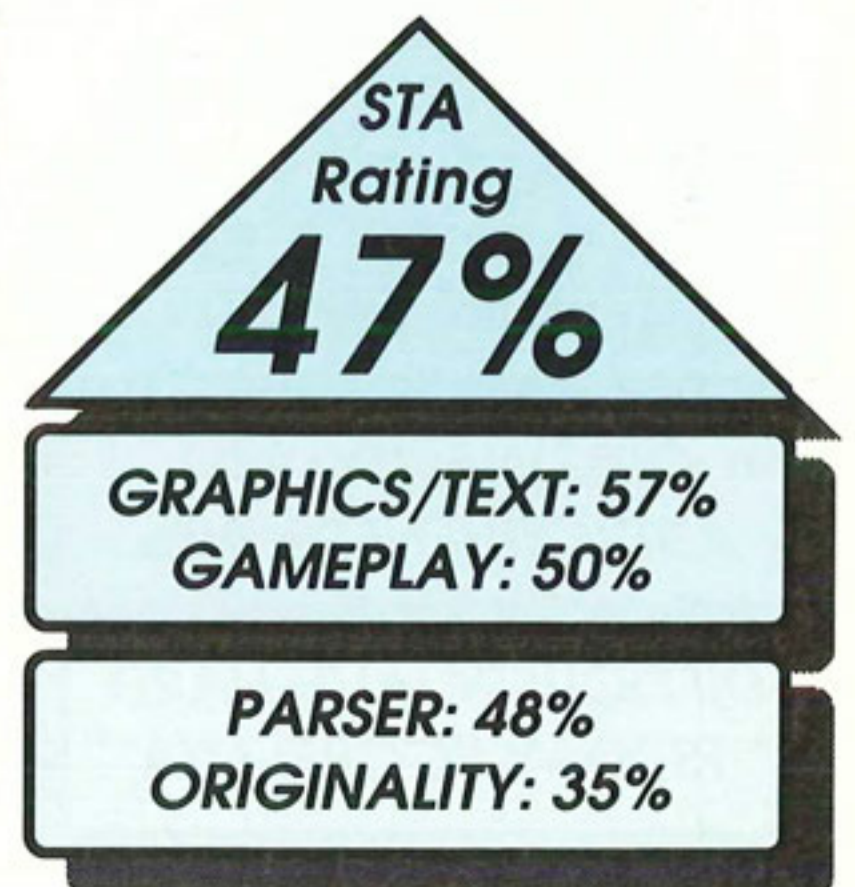
screens, into giant characters which even a bat could decipher. A further plus is that instructions are given

The graphics are not as minutely detailed as the Magnetic Scrolls games, but most of them are very well done indeed and they certainly add flavour. What is a little offputting is that the same pictures are used repeatedly for different locations throughout all the games. **STA**



The door swings open.
What now? e
The door closes behind you.
You are in the living room, a long comfortable room decorated with autumn shades of brown and gold. A patio door leads out to the garden, sunshine streaming through its leaded panes. You can see an inlaid looking glass on the wall and a fine metronome in pride of place.
What now? █

You visit a rather more pleasant location complete with comfortable rooms and a patio



"The appearance of the English version of *Captain Blood* has been eagerly awaited by the journalistic world since preview copies of the French version were seen. Infogrames have, in conjunction with ERE International, released a game that seems unwilling to be classified into any particular genre of games and sets a style all of its own."

You play the part of a degenerating Captain Blood and you must travel the

CAPTAIN BLOOD

■■■■ INFOGRAMES (£24.95) ■■■■

life-forms on them, so it is a wise man who notes down the coordinates of inhabited planets before venturing off into the unknown.

The whole game is controlled by mouse and is easily accessible. However, the game play takes a while to get into and the strategy involved is quite complicated. Due to the game's 'Bio-game' concept, whole planets, or just the inhabitants can suddenly

Perseverance is the name of the game here. The game takes a lot of getting into and, as such, can easily be written off as too difficult and put to the back of the games cabinet. However, once time is taken to understand the game, it becomes very challenging. Notes need to be taken constantly otherwise messages and coordinates of planets are lost. As for the aliens, well, there's no pleasing some of them. The best way to get ahead in this game is to 'save game' after every successful encounter and then continue. All in all, a very worthwhile game and one that will keep you busy for many moons.

Captain Blood really is an innovative game. Just about every component is new and original and all have been executed with care and skill. The graphics are stunning and have, in large, been responsible for the fantastically good response that this game has met with. However, under the gloss, superb graphics, great music and striking sound effects, lies a playable, enjoyable game of depth and complexity. Maybe if I had to criticise one aspect, it would be the low-level flying sequence which holds most of the graphical appeal - it isn't at all taxing and isn't half of what it could have been. I understand that Infogrames are planning a game based solely around this section of Captain Blood and arcade addicts should wait for this with some excitement.

HG

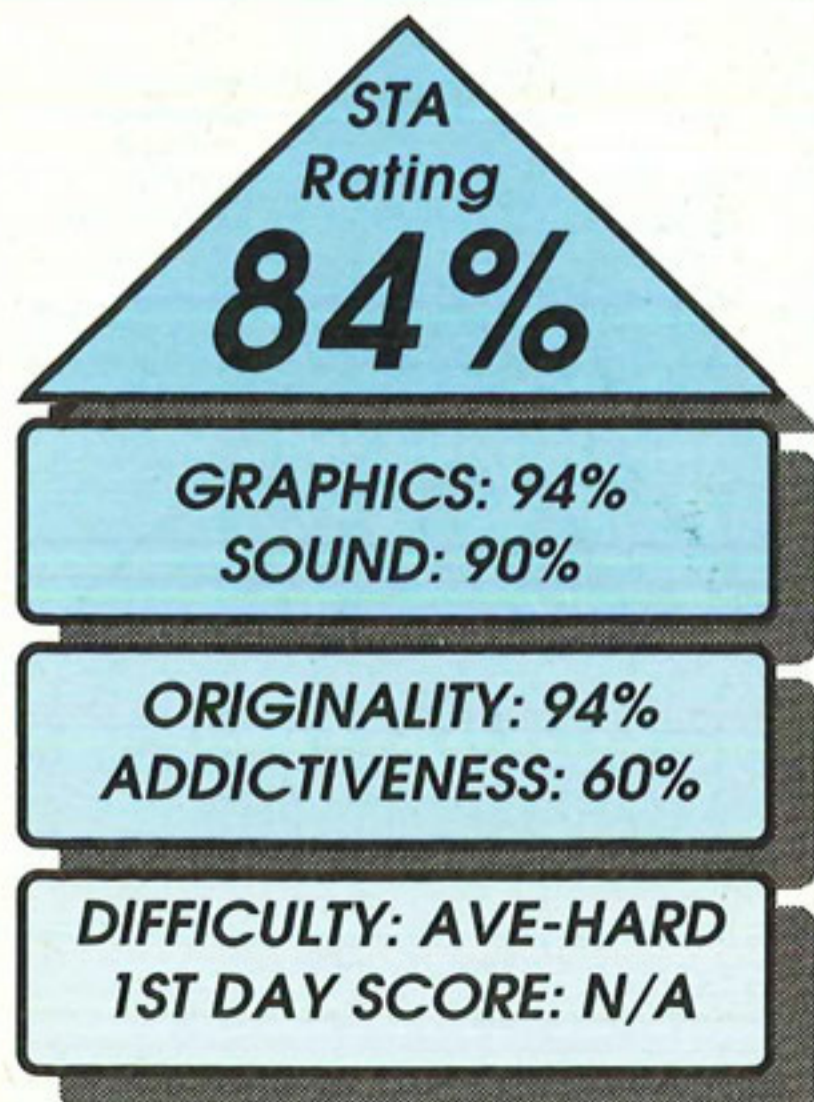
MM

Hydra galaxy in order to find and destroy the Numbers (five of Blood's clones). This, in turn, will enable you to regain your 'vital fluid' thus saving your life.

The Hydra galaxy numbers over 30,000 habitable planets that are accessible to you, but only some have

evolve, be born or die. The game allows you to save to disk and this is

helpful as it can take quite a while to advance successfully in the game.



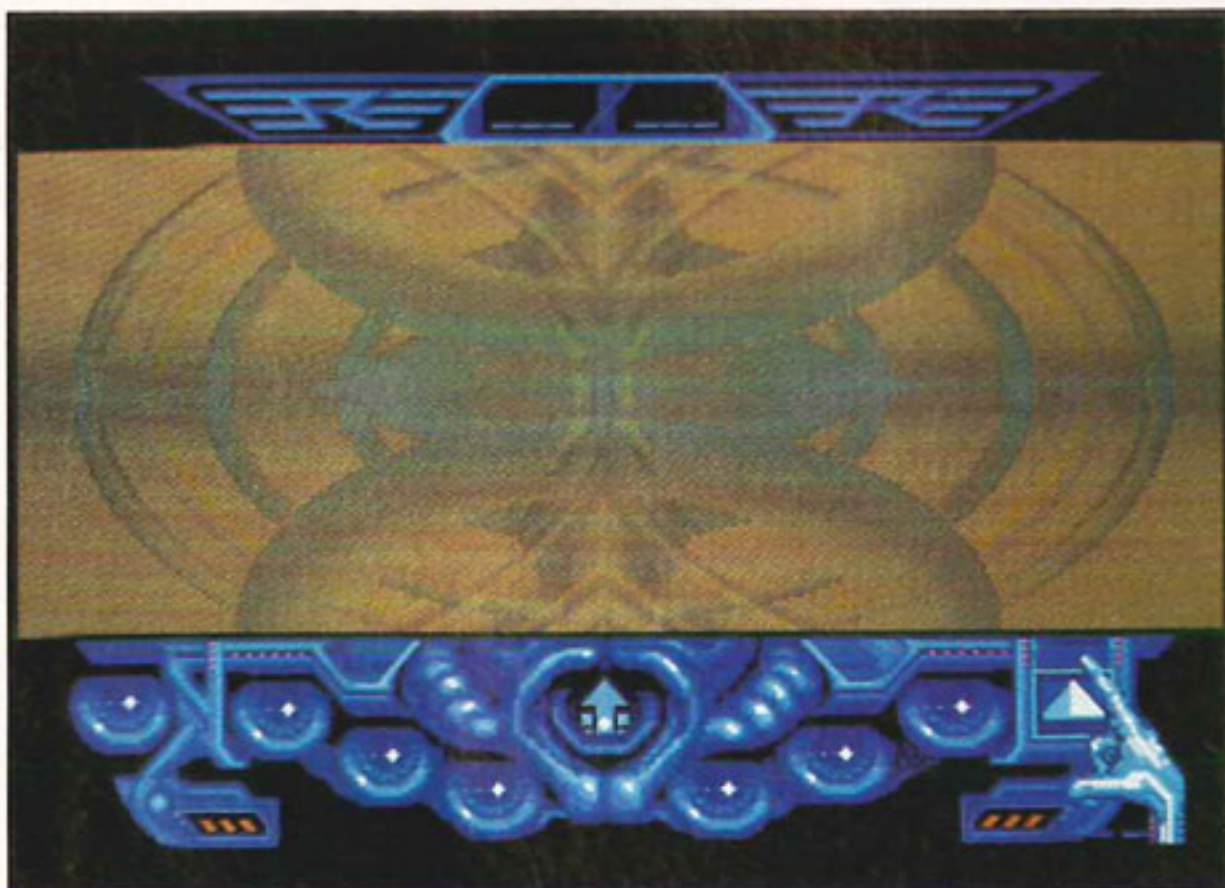
Obliterate the planet. Unfortunately, this might make quite a few enemies around the galaxy and must therefore be used with caution. Hopefully, you have managed to gain enough information in your travels to get you to the next planet. Time is running out and Captain Blood's life is at stake.



The main screen. It is from here that all controls are activated. From here we can: set course for another planet; teleport willing (and ONLY willing) beings into the Ark; disintegrate a teleported being (if it's a Number then Blood will regenerate); send an Oorxx down to a planet to see if there are any inhabitants to communicate with; bring up the galaxy map in order to set coordinates; destroy a planet; detect whether or not a planet has a protection system, and communicate with another being. Clicking on the galaxy icon with Blood's wobbly hand (mouse controlled) allows us to access to the



Galaxy map. By use of X and Y cross-hairs we can set a course for the Ark to take us to the next planet. Each planet has an X/Y coordinate. The course set is indicated in the top right-hand corner of the screen and the position of your cursor is indicated top left. We'll set coordinates and then select ...



Hyperspace. This is an incredible piece of colour cycling that beats the pants off any 'Doctor Who' effect. Anyway, after a short while (even shorter if you use a short cut) you arrive at your destination orbiting the planet.

From here you can send down an Oorxx on a ...



Contact Mission. Here you pilot the Oorxx from the Ark and must search out the inhabitants. Mouse-controlled, the Oorxx is equipped with a life-form detector in the shape of a red aim symbol. As you can see from the screen, there is a leftwards-pointing arrow. This indicates the direction in which you should travel in order to find the life form. Inhabitants usually live at the end of a canyon and so, once sighted, it's ...



Down the canyon. This involves some deft mouse-work to ensure that your Oorxx does not crash into the fantastic vector-graphic landscape. The crash sequence is so good it actually makes players jump with the shock! Keep low, otherwise defence systems will lock on and destroy you. Hopefully, at the end you will find a friendly being, in this case, a ...



Migrax. You can now communicate with him/her using the sign language on the lower half of the screen. Basically, it boils down to you making the being (any one of thirteen different civilisations) happy and then trying to extract information, especially planet coordinates, so that you can continue further into the game. Sometimes, however, the being is rather unwilling to give any info and seems to be rather offensive. In this situation it is perhaps best to beat a hasty retreat back to the ship and Blow-up the planet (see shot on first page of this review).

SPIDERTRONIC

INFOGRAMES (£19.95)

"Spidertronic's colourful loading-screen is accompanied by some terrific digitized music from Ulrich, which ceases immediately the game commences. The game is played on a three-dimensional, multi-layered network which, at first, is similar to a diagonal perspective of a chess board and, likewise, this so-called electronic web is covered in squares."

The majority of these squares are dark blue, but in the furthest corner of the web, a single spider is positioned on a red and yellow square and waiting for your guidance.

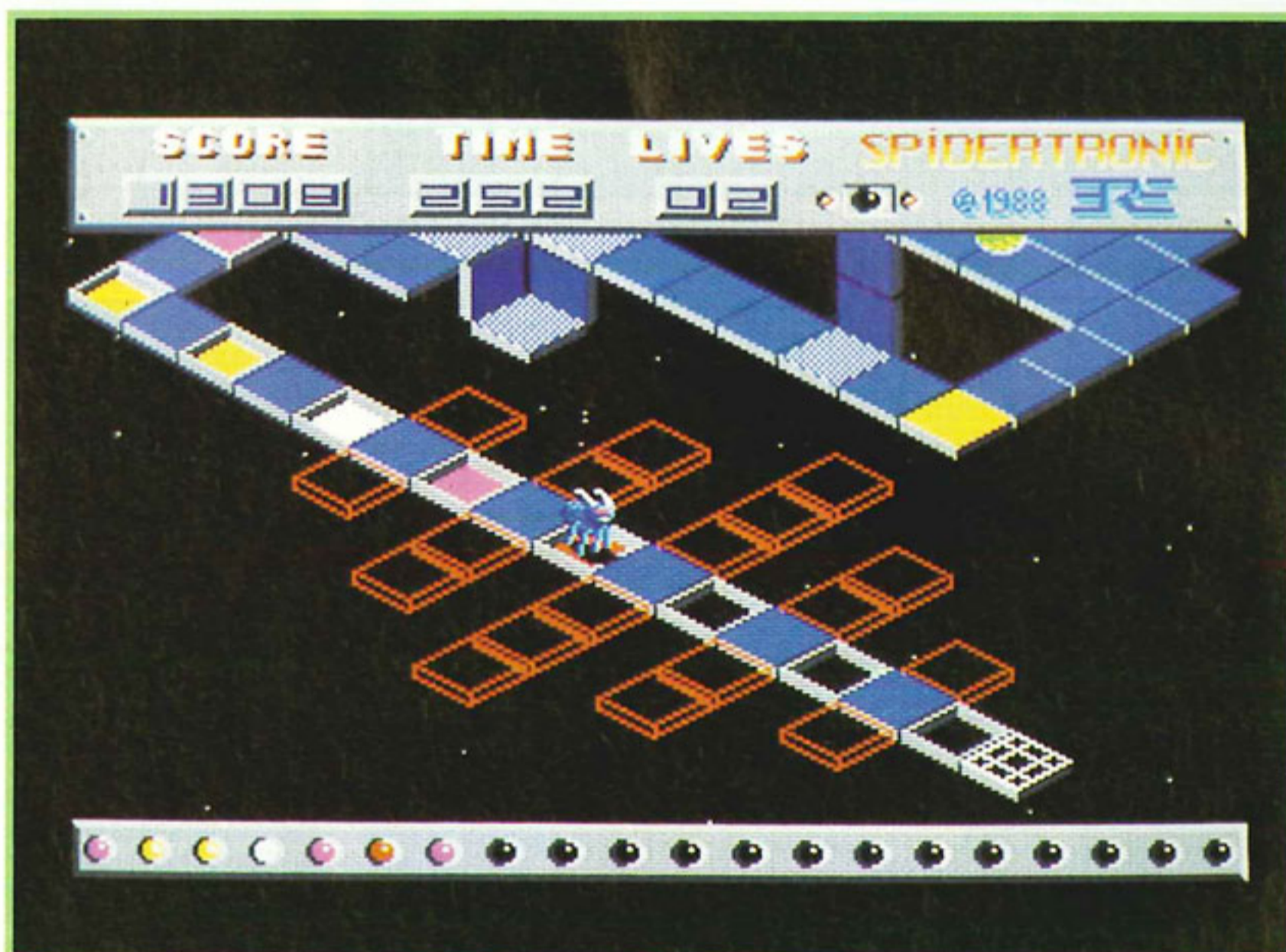
As described, the tiles that make up the electronic web are blue, but at the base of the screen, the first of twenty lights illuminates to represent the first coloured tile that you must locate and collect. These tiles are scattered throughout each level and moving the spider from the starter tile, you must direct it around the electronic web in search of the indicated coloured tile. The joystick assumes full control of the game and quick directional movements in all four corners causes the spider to turn around, while holding the joystick in one position sends it scurrying in the corresponding direction. However, like the Rook in a chess game, the spider can only move in straight lines and not diagonally.

To collect a tile, you must move the spider over the indicated coloured square which flashes and emits a

It is always refreshing to review an arcade game which cannot easily be categorized. By successfully combining originality with arcade entertainment, strategy and perplexing puzzles, Spidertronics is a fine example of this rare occurrence. The graphics and sound presentation is as unique as the game-play and changing the position of the coloured tiles with the screen editor ensures a constant challenge. Quite simply, Spidertronic is an essential addition to your software collection.

JS

sound to signify that the tile has been successfully absorbed. With the tile in tow, you must manoeuvre the spider over the electronic web and locate a so-called Teleport Grid. However, from the moment you move away from the



The aim of the game is to gather blocks to fill gaps in Spidy's path. This shot shows seven elements already in place leaving just three blocks to go

starter square, the spider must avoid a variety of coloured spheres which remain constant adversaries throughout the game. These spheres materialize out of thin air, pursue and attempt to trap the spider. Any contact with a sphere results in immediate loss of a life, which is accompanied by a rather loud explosion. Sparkling stars are the first indication that a sphere is about to materialize and you have no more than a second to move the spider away from the location and strategically negotiate your way across the web. The spider cannot fall over the edge of the web, but each level has a number of elevators which transport you to lower levels. Moving to the top of one of the elevators which is marked by a light blue tile, the spider crawls over the edge and an invisible force controls its ascent to the next level.

A sphere invariably begins to form as the spider drops to the next level and so you must quickly move away from the base of the elevator.

The web is fraught with paralyzing tiles which momentarily sever your control over the spider and during this nerve-racking paralysis, you are at the mercy of the spheres. The Teleport Grid is located at the very end of each level and contains any number of empty tile spaces. Moving the spider

STA
Rating

65%

GRAPHICS: 58%
SOUND: 55%

ORIGINALITY: 61%
ADDICTIVENESS: 66%

DIFFICULTY: EASY-AVE
1ST DAY SCORE: 5000

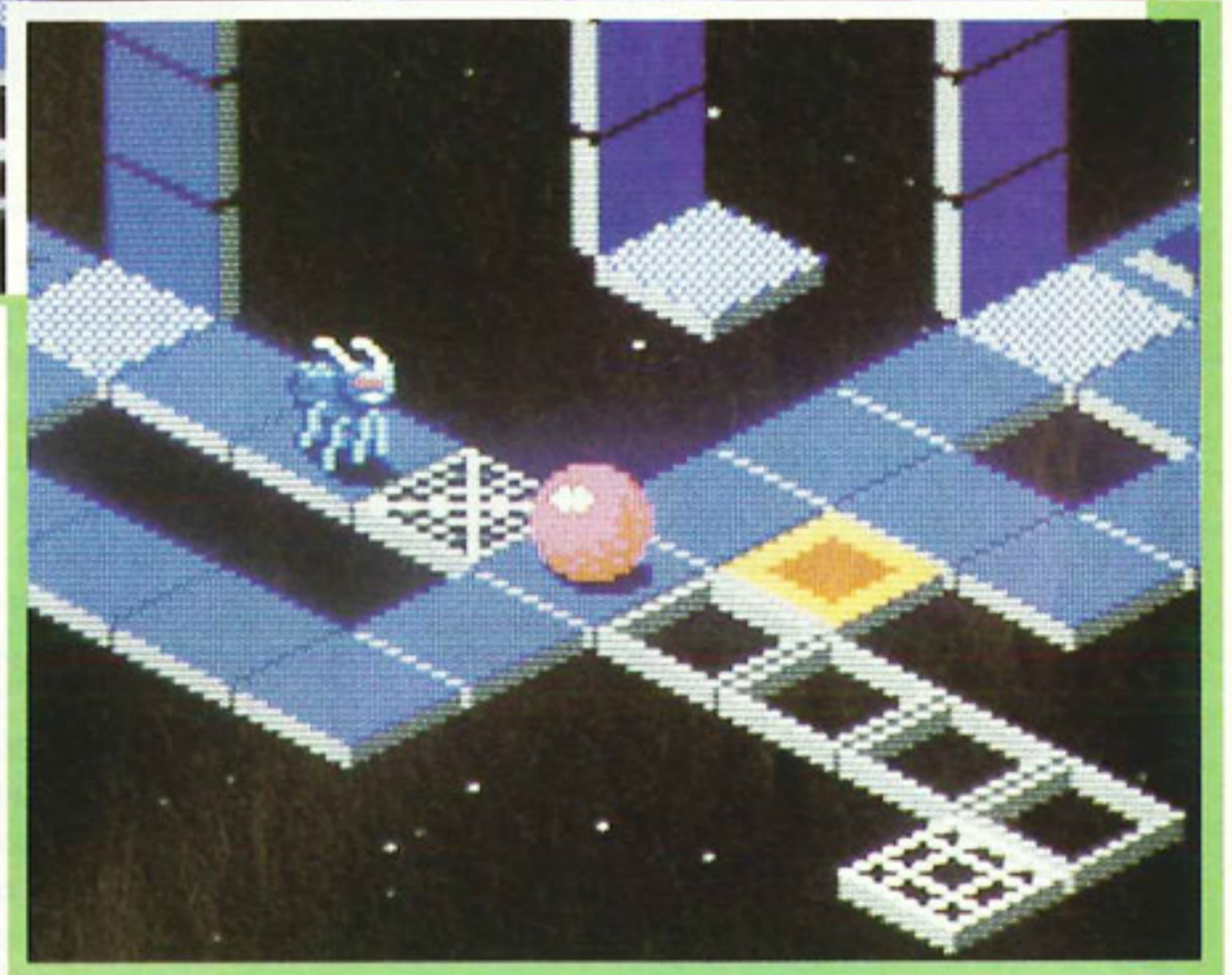
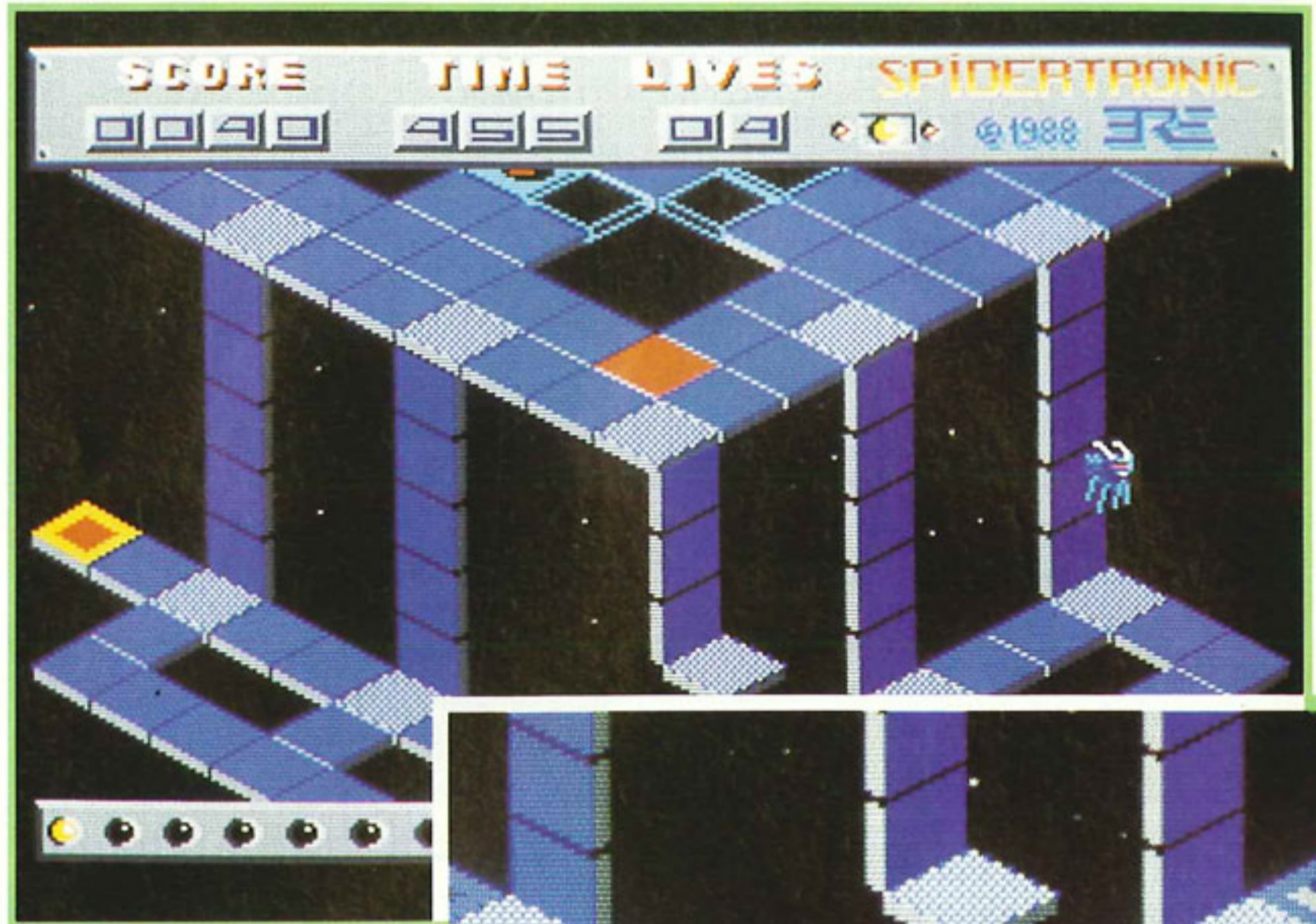
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| MOUSE | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| COLOUR | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| MONO | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 520ST | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 1040ST | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

on top of the empty space automatically deposits the coloured tile. The next light at the base of the screen indicates the next colour to collect.

In addition to those tenacious spheres, time is also your enemy and the aim is to complete the game within an allotted five hundred seconds. However, collecting time pastilles, which are represented by capsules on top of certain blue tiles, gives you bonus time. After you have filled all of the empty tile spaces within the Teleport Grid, you must move the spider on top of the final tile which contains a small web. With a foreboding sound effect, this final tile transports the spider to the next level. Although level two only requires the collection of two tiles, it is an introduction to more complex webs. Ensuing levels require numerous tile collection in webs where tiny islands are joined by single paths of tiles, which makes avoiding those spheres practically impossible. It is in these latter levels that the arachnid's defence comes into play. Pressing the firebutton whilst the spider is on a dark blue square, leaves a web which destroys any sphere that bounces on it. This web can be used as a last-ditch defence when you encounter a sphere on a single path.

Spidertronics contains only ten levels, but the progressive complexity will keep the most determined arcade addict occupied. However, with a built-

Use the lifts to move from level to level (main shot) but be careful, you may end up in the clutches of one of those coloured balls. Fortunately, you do have a secret weapon in the form of a deadly spiders web (inset).



in screen editor, you can alter the position of the collectable coloured tiles. The 'X' key activates the edit screen and a window/cursor appears on the game screen. Pressing the Clr/Home key activates the tile selector and tapping the spacebar validates

the position of the tile. You must then specify the order in which you want

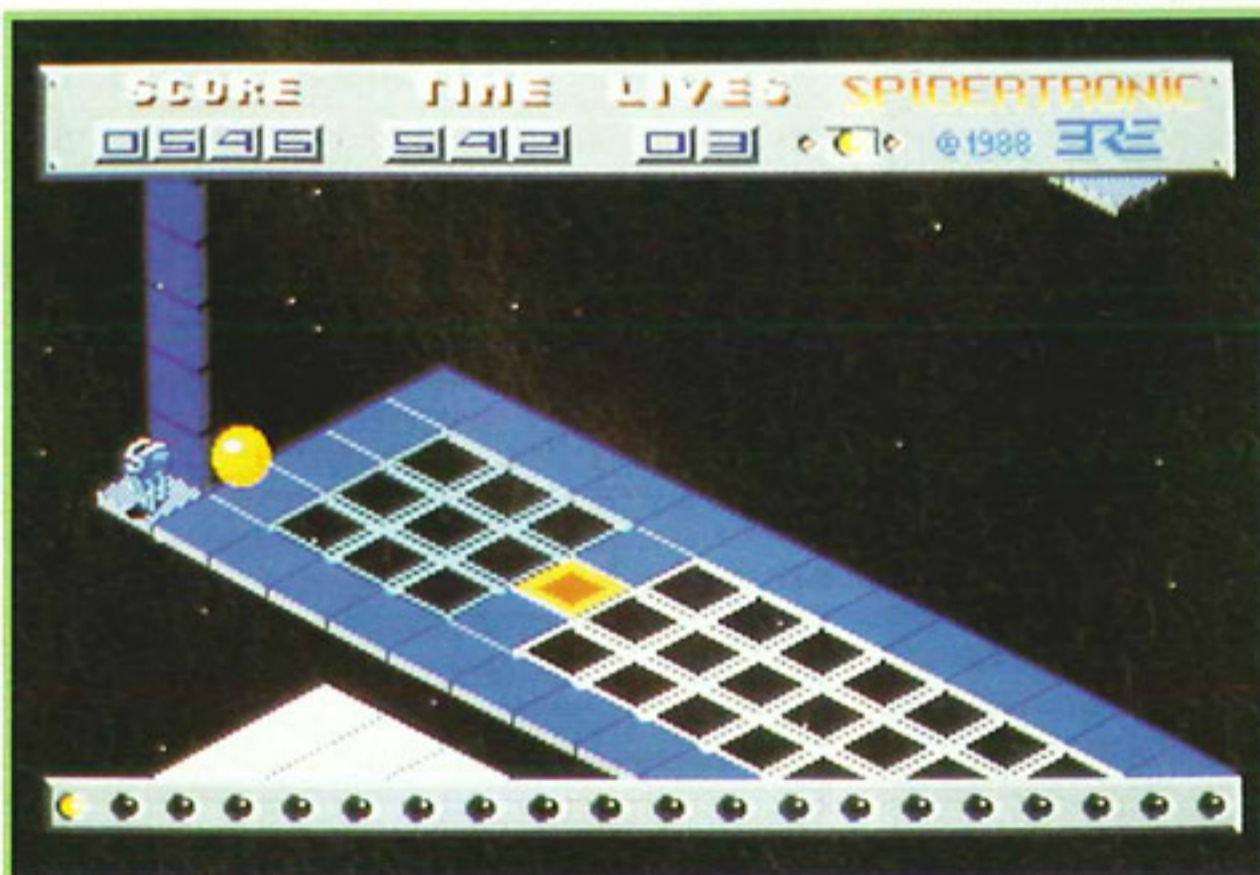
STA

This is very reminiscent of a game I played on the C64 a few years back, called 'Flip & Flop'. Spidertronics is a simple, yet quite entertaining game, involving the placing of tiles in their respective holes. The game is enhanced by colourful, uncluttered graphics and if it were not for the dubious collision detection, it would get quite a high mark, but being killed by an alien in an adjacent square just isn't playing fair!

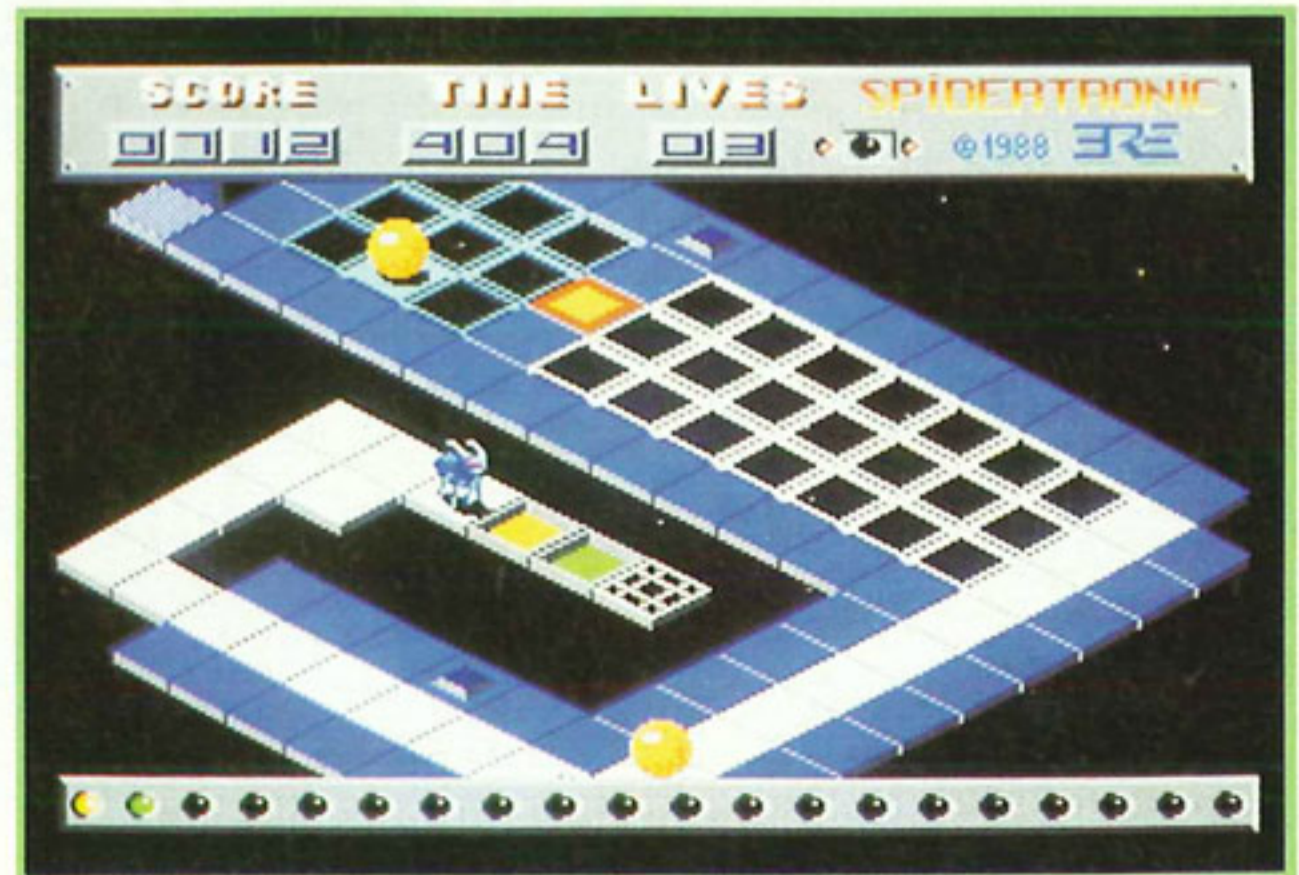
Although on completion of a level, the next stage gets bigger and trickier, there is very little variation, and interest soon wanes as boredom sets in.

Because of its simplicity and attractive graphics I can only recommend this game to the younger players amongst you. The quick-reflex gang should look elsewhere.

SM



Now where is that exit and dont forget to dodge the yellow ball



You've found the exit - all the blocks are in place and nothing can stop you

INTERNATIONAL SOCCER

MICRODEAL (£19.95)

"Considering that soccer is the most popular sport in the world, there are very few computer simulations of the game. The reasons for this are twofold: firstly it is such an obvious choice and secondly, with twenty-two little players to coordinate, it is a difficult subject portray."

International Soccer is Microdeal's long-awaited contribution to soccer on the ST, although a game of the same name came free on ROM cartridge with the Commodore 64 and I was, therefore, interested to see whether its latter-day namesake had any connections. Pressing any numeric key accesses the one-player mode, while

pressing the space bar prepares the game for two-player participation. There are nine progressive levels of difficulty, which increase the awkwardness of ball-control and, in the single-player against computer mode, the intelligence of the opposition.

I'm in two minds about this game and so must say: 'try before you buy'. The animation of the characters is good and the movement around the field seemed smooth. Most of the controls are well thought out but, unfortunately, others, such as the dual function of the fire button to transfer control between players and also to make the selected player kick or tackle, causes severe hassle when, say, you try to kick the ball and instead end up controlling another player. One other thing that puzzled me was: how do you get the ball out of your own penalty area if the opposition do not shoot? If you tackle them it is automatically a penalty. These minor niggles spoil what is otherwise a very good game and, for all its good points, this one still gets a 'No-No' from me.

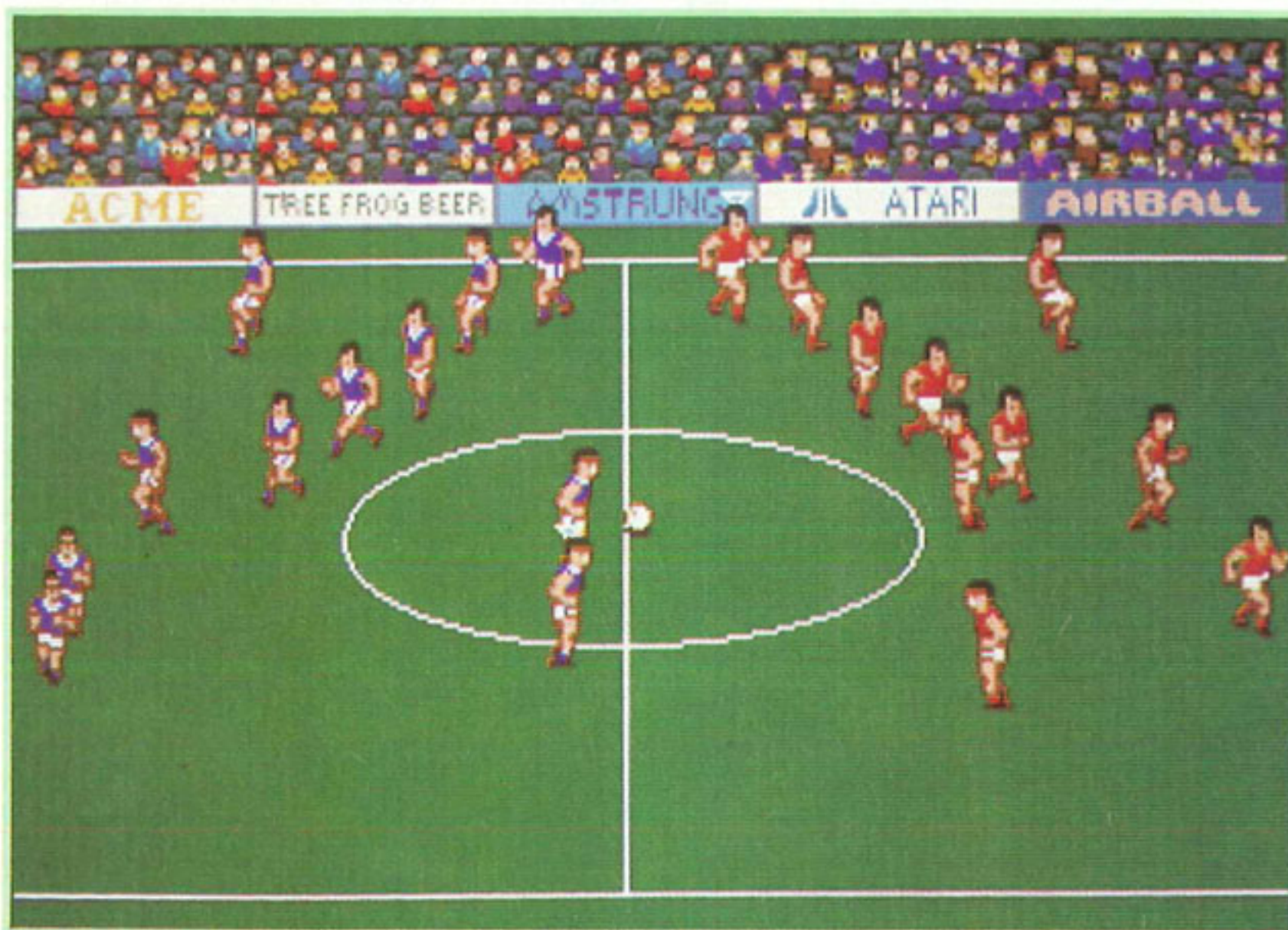
MM



Team colour and match length selection

A comprehensive option screen allows you to alter the characteristics of the game and, in keeping with the theme, the joystick controls a soccer-ball-shaped cursor to make the selections. Placing this spherical cursor over the player-formation icon enables you to choose between an attacking or defending team. One option offers greater forward and mid-field presence, while the other places emphasis on mid-field and defensive tactics. Naturally, weather and ground conditions affect the game and choosing wet, which is symbolized by a puddle, causes the players to slip when they change direction quickly. A corner flag shows the wind speed and direction which, again, can be altered by pressing the firebutton. Even greater authenticity can be achieved by choosing a day or night game. The night game displays a slightly darker screen and each player casts four shadows from the floodlights. Finally, there are two players on the screen and placing the cursor over each one and pressing the firebutton changes the team colours.

The players emerge from the tunnel accompanied by a choice of



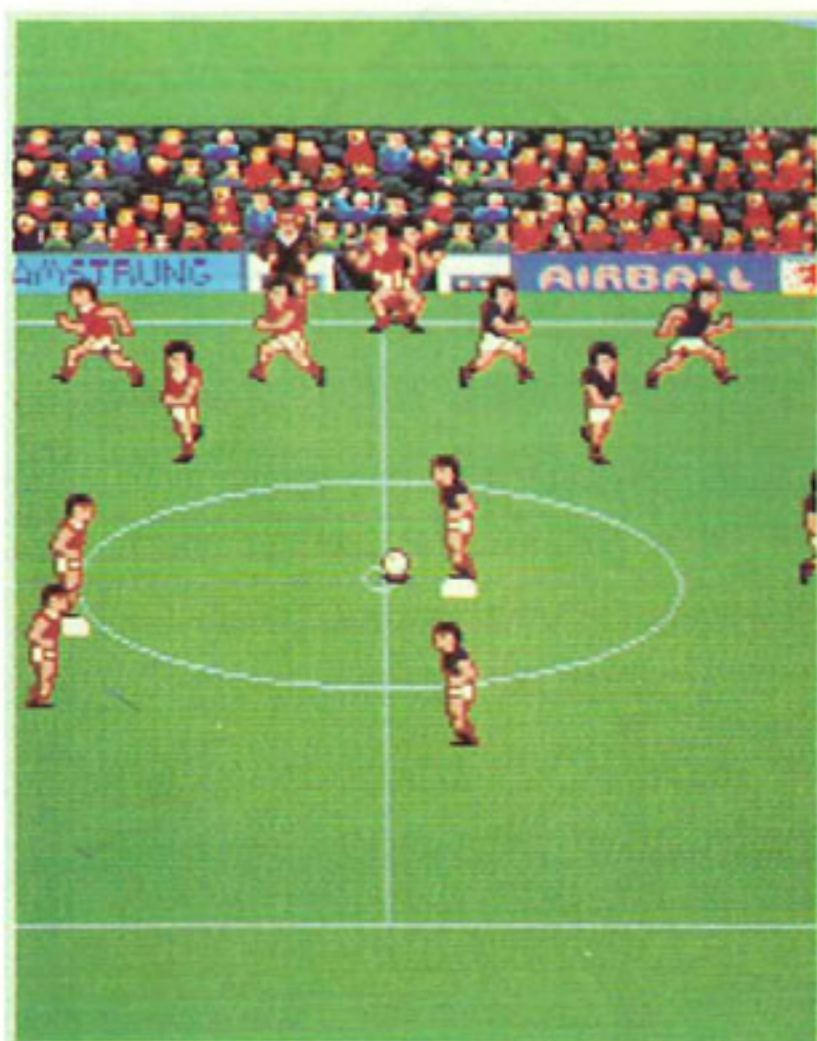
The players rejoin the pitch after retiring at half time for tea and buns

| | | |
|----------|-------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|
| KEYBOARD | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| JOYSTICK | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| MOUSE | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| COLOUR | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| MONO | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| 520ST | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| 1040ST | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> |

The action is frantic and a little uncontrollable at times, but Microdeal's International Soccer is great fun. Computer soccer lends itself to two-player participation and two fallible humans grappling with joysticks certainly creates more excitement than pitting your wits against the logical actions of the computer. There are, however, a few aspects that mar an otherwise entertaining game. An alternative method of indicating which player is on the ball would certainly rectify some confusion, as the white semicircle at the player's feet can often mask the ball completely. Additionally, the rapid scrolling causes nauseating optical illusions when play goes backwards and forwards quickly. Furthermore, whilst the choice of four tunes for the game is welcome, the lack of sound effects, such as the ref's whistle, the cheering crowd and the punt of the ball, are conspicuous by their absence. Nevertheless, this is a must for all armchair athletes.

JS

four typical arcade tunes and the crowd in the stands silently cheer and wave their team's colours as they take position on the pitch. There is no referee's whistle to indicate the start of the match, but play soon commences. The player on the ball is indicated by a white semicircle at his feet, which can often be confused with the ball itself. Tackling and gaining possession of the ball requires bringing your man who is nearest the action into play. Changing control from one player to another is achieved by returning the joystick to the centre and pressing the firebutton. The white semicircle should be transferred to the man nearest the opposition player with the ball and you can



Fever-pitched activity on the half-way line

Goal mouth action - you control the player with the white shadow under his feet



challenge by pressing the firebutton and wrenching the joystick to the left or right. However, if you try and tackle a player in your goal area, the opposition are awarded a penalty.

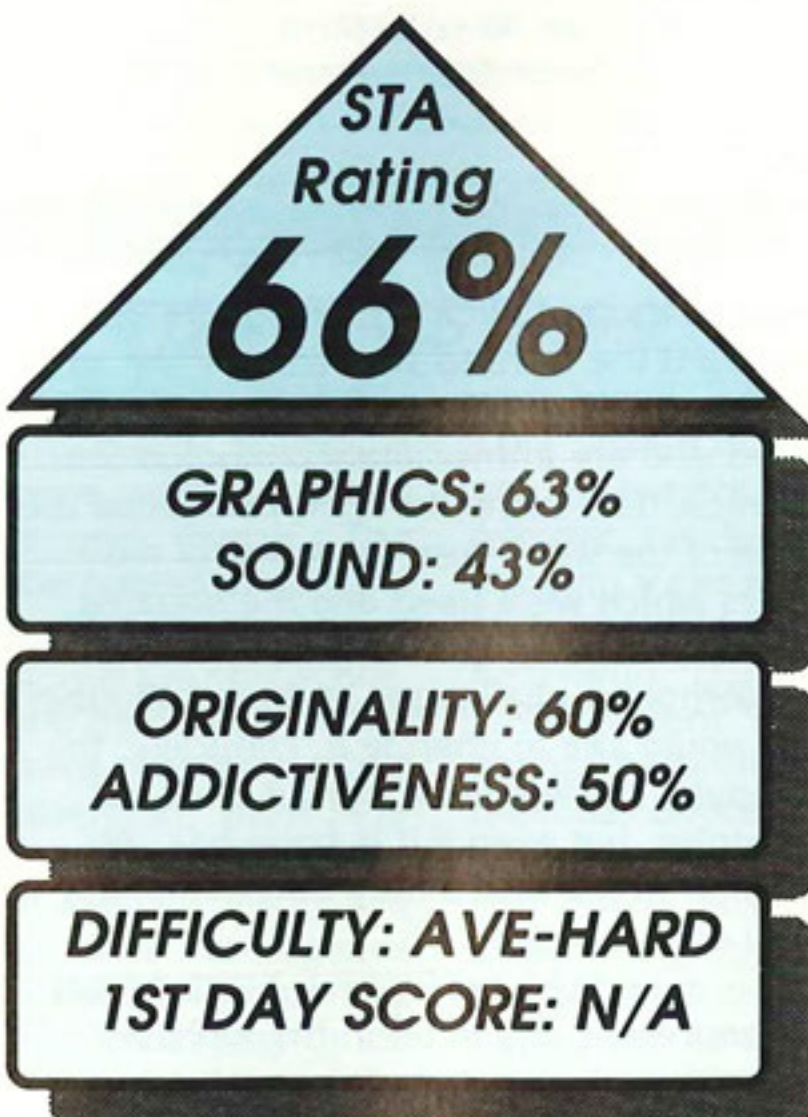
As described, tackling a player in the goal area is futile and so the goalkeeper is on his own. Unaided, the keeper crouches to show he is ready to intercept the ball, and to make him

International Soccer seems to be a beefed-up version of the classic C64 game. The graphics and sound have been improved and a few new options, such as the pitch and light conditions, have been included. Unfortunately, the game failed to really captivate me, largely due to the poor controls - and the computer opponent always winning! Only when played with two players did the game really begin to be fun. Overall, International Soccer, although a seemingly good idea, failed to score. I could only recommend it to ardent football fanatics.

NC

Whether you require a short ground pass, a chip, or long clearance, the length of time that you press the firebutton determines the distance that the ball will travel. Judging distances is difficult, especially when you need to pass the ball. Effective passing, therefore, requires finding a space, kicking the ball and simultaneously transferring control to the recipient of the pass. Finally, you control the throw-ins and corners for both teams by simply pressing the space bar.

STA



move in the desired direction you must move the joystick up, down, left or right. If you gain control of the game, the ball stays at your player's feet until you press the firebutton to kick.



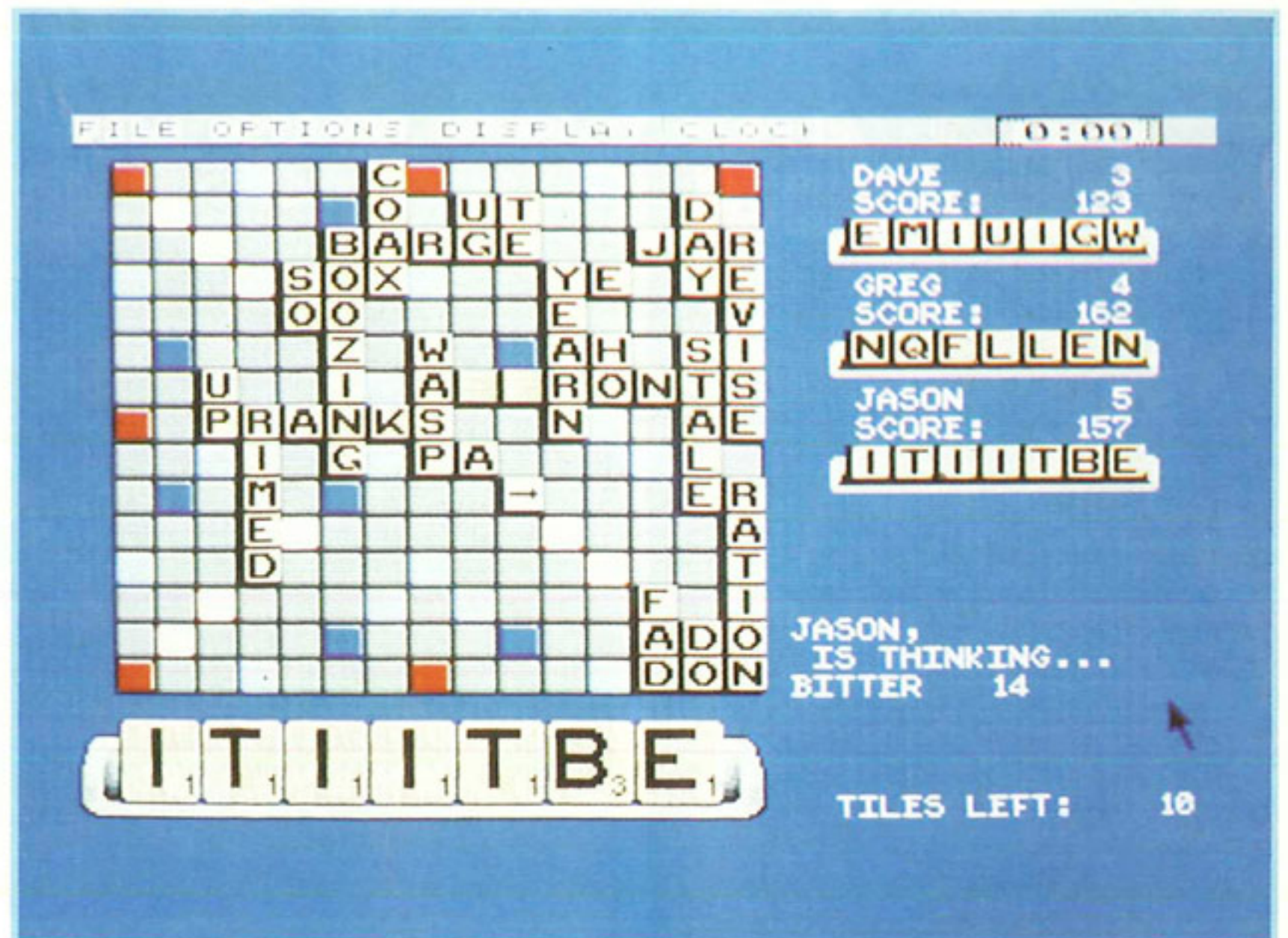
"A game that is designed to test the range of your vocabulary sounds about as appealing as an English examination, but Scrabble's longevity and phenomenal success proves that it is an ideal source of entertainment."

Leisure Genius have established themselves in the software market as the converters of popular board games onto various computers but, to my knowledge, this is their first ST conversion. Scrabble De Luxe boasts a vocabulary of 23,000 words and eight skills to suit all vocabulary abilities - from cat to cataclysmic! One to four people can participate or you can play against as many as three-computer governed players. The basic rules of Scrabble state that at the beginning of the game, each player has a letter rack containing seven letters which are chosen at random by the computer. The game screen displays the playing board with the player's letter racks on the right-hand side. As with the original format, the board is made up of squares, most of which are blank. However, some of the squares are so-called Premium squares, which can double and triple the value of the letter or word that covers them.

After pulling down the 'File' menu and clicking on 'New Game', you are asked to enter the names of each player. The selection of letters are automatically placed on the racks and text appears beneath the letter racks to constantly inform you of the state of play. When it is your turn, you must think of a word of more than two letters from your rack and,

Scrabble falls neatly into the software catalogue somewhere between Chess and Othello. It is a rather slow, but nevertheless interesting, game. Not being a member of Mensa I didn't know the difference between a double letter score and a triple word score, but if I was in any doubt the computer players certainly weren't! The way the machine manages to make words scoring over fifty is quite beyond me. Still, the hint option came in handy (even if I still didn't get the word.). Scrabble is a fascinating piece of software, very well programmed and very user friendly. It won't be winning any awards for its sales, but it would certainly make an interesting addition to your software range. Try playing four computer players against each other on the highest level - I've never seen some of the words they come out with!

NC



SCRABBLE

LEISURE GENIUS (£19.95)

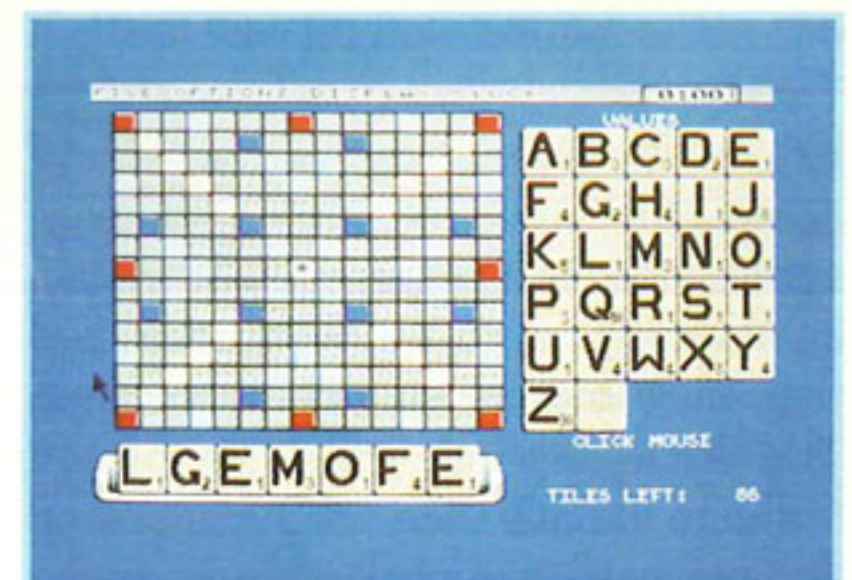
As expected, Leisure Genius have made a terrific job of this conversion from board to computer. It is straightforward and easy to use, which allows you to channel your full concentration into the game. Computer Scrabble De Luxe proves with the same conviction as the original board game, that educational themes can be entertaining if presented in the right way - you can't even lose any of those little letters! This is a great way to play Scrabble.

JS

with the mouse, click on the square that you want the word to start from. If the word is accepted, the letters appear on the board and are immediately deducted from the rack. The computer then calculates the value of the word from the value of the letters which were used and the squares that they cover. If a word is not acceptable, the computer challenges and asks whether you would like to change it. Naturally, the computer challenges a word it does not recognize, but even if it is bona fide, its addition to the board may cause a wrong word elsewhere.

Like the board game, blank letters can represent any letter in the alphabet and, although they have no point value, the rest of the letters within the word can be accumulated. The pull-down option menu offers a 'Hint' which, when selected, analyses the letters on your rack and the board. It then takes the possible word and positions it on the board. In my opinion, at any level, this completely defeats the object of the game. Without cheating to that extent, you can select 'Juggle Rack', which rearranges the letters in the rack to form possible words. Selecting 'Change Tiles' allows you to exchange from one to seven tiles by entering the specific letters that you want to alter and pressing Return.

You can play against the clock in Tournament Scrabble, in which a word must be formed in under two minutes or in Lightning Scrabble, that only allows a mere thirty seconds to complete a word. When it



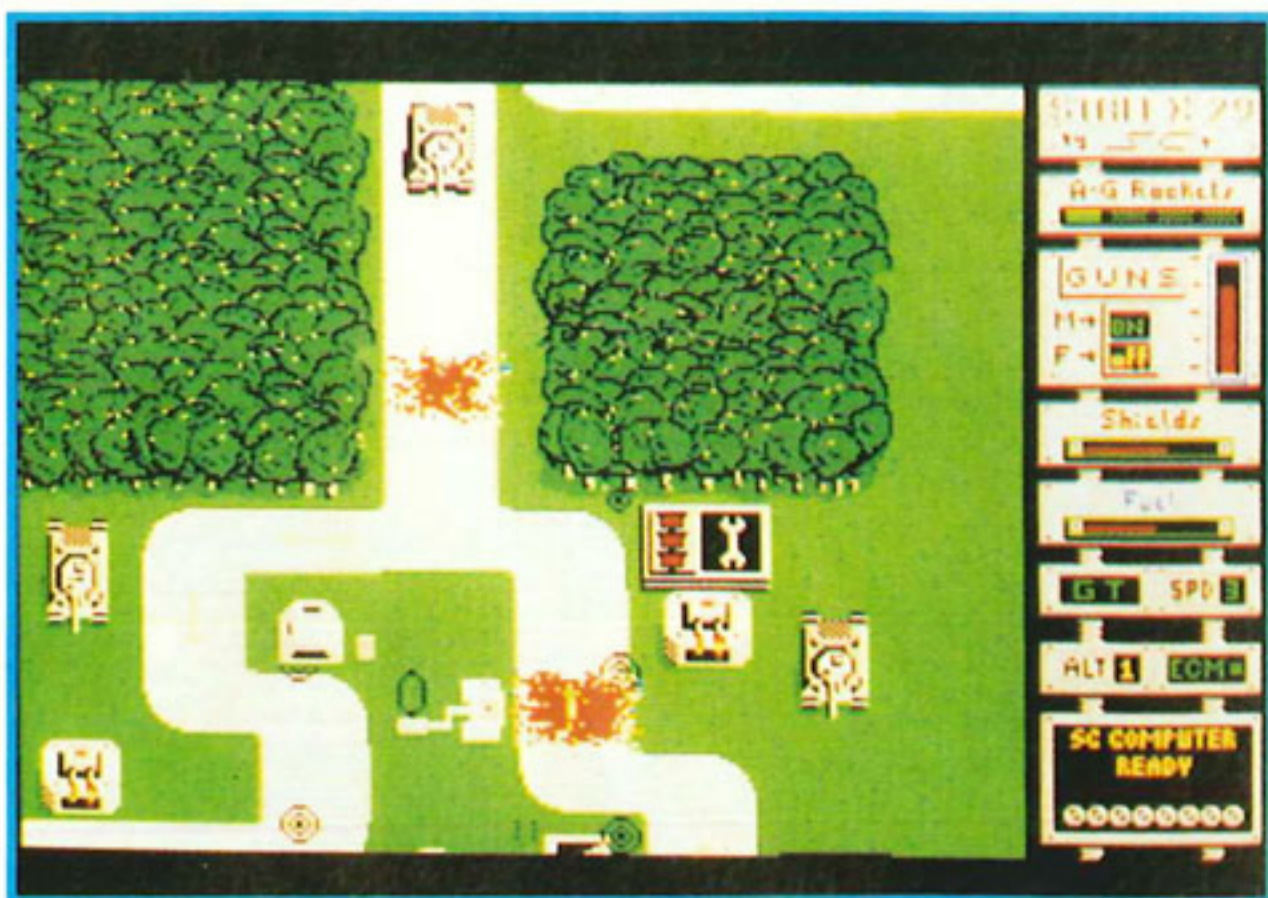
STA
Rating

69%

GRAPHICS: 60%
SOUND: N/A

ORIGINALITY: 65%
ADDICTIVENESS: 58%

DIFFICULTY: N/A
1ST DAY SCORE: N/A



STAFF

INFOGRAMES (£19.95)

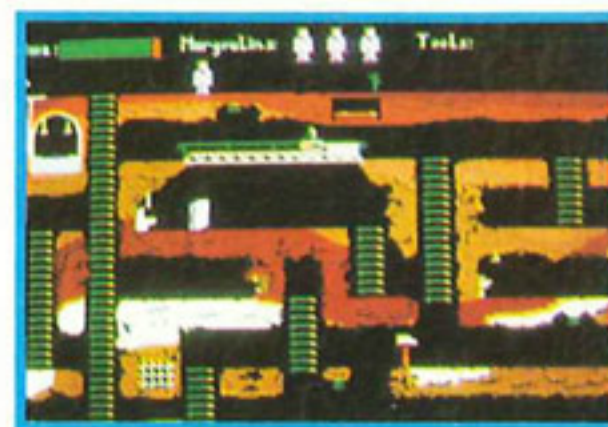
A bonanza of points can be won in this mindless and destructive but, nevertheless, enjoyable shoot-em-up which calls for speed and agility from your mouse-button-clicking finger rather than strategy and skill. As described in the brief scenario, your mission is to recover the Atari ROM from a Soviet military base and cause as much havoc and destruction in the process. Scattered about the terrain are six character codes contained

within so-called Red Zone buildings. Each of these buildings must be destroyed to reveal the character within. The option-screen allows you to select the raid environment, which includes day, night, snow-covered terrain or infra-red scanner. Then you have the choice of Simulator or you can opt for the game options which contain three levels of progressive difficulty.

The screen scrolls verti-

cally at a constant pace and, in Simulator mode, a small weaponry sight appears on screen. The terrain is covered in static targets, such as, gun-posts, dams and bridges, while a variety of military vehicles move across the screen in all directions. The movement of the gun-sights is directly linked to the mouse and the weapons are activated by pressing the mouse buttons. The left-hand button discharges light machine-gun fire, while the right-hand button dispatches more destructive but easily exhaustible missiles. As the screen scrolls, the art is to centre the sights on as many targets as possible and destroy them with the weaponry.

The Red Zone buildings are easily recognizable and, when destroyed, they reveal a computer-game character such as Pacman. So-called surface plates must be destroyed to reveal four colour combinations which, if not disabled, stock the next military installation. The installation gates must be blasted and, once inside, the weather conditions change and your screen freezes up. You can wipe the screen with your mouse gun-sight to reveal a panel comprising all four colour codes. Clicking on fuel and weaponry can restock your supplies, but only five clicks are allowed or you will be



thrown out of the installation.

Staff contains an endless supply of targets to blast and, as described, it is not all mindless destruction. However, you experience the extent of the game's variety within the first minute and the enemy's positions never change from game to game.

STA Rating
52%

GRAPHICS: 50%
SOUND: 50%

ORIGINALITY: 52%
ADDICTIVENESS: 55%

DIFFICULTY: AVERAGE
1ST DAY SCORE: 70000

Warlock's Quest is one of the best arcade games to come from the continent in the last few months. Its name may sound unoriginal and predictable and it does have the obligatory cloaked wizard who must find the standard-issue bottles of potions, spells and sword, but do not be discouraged! The game-screen displays the surface of the earth with an evil subterranean world lurking beneath. After numerous sinister laughs and storm effects, the cloaked wizard stands with staff in hand in a cemetery, and pressing the space-bar starts the game. The wizard is fully controlled with the joystick, with left and right manipulation moving him across the screen, pushing upwards causing him to jump and pressing the fire button

WARLOCKS QUEST

INFOGRAMES (£19.95)

sending fireballs from his staff.

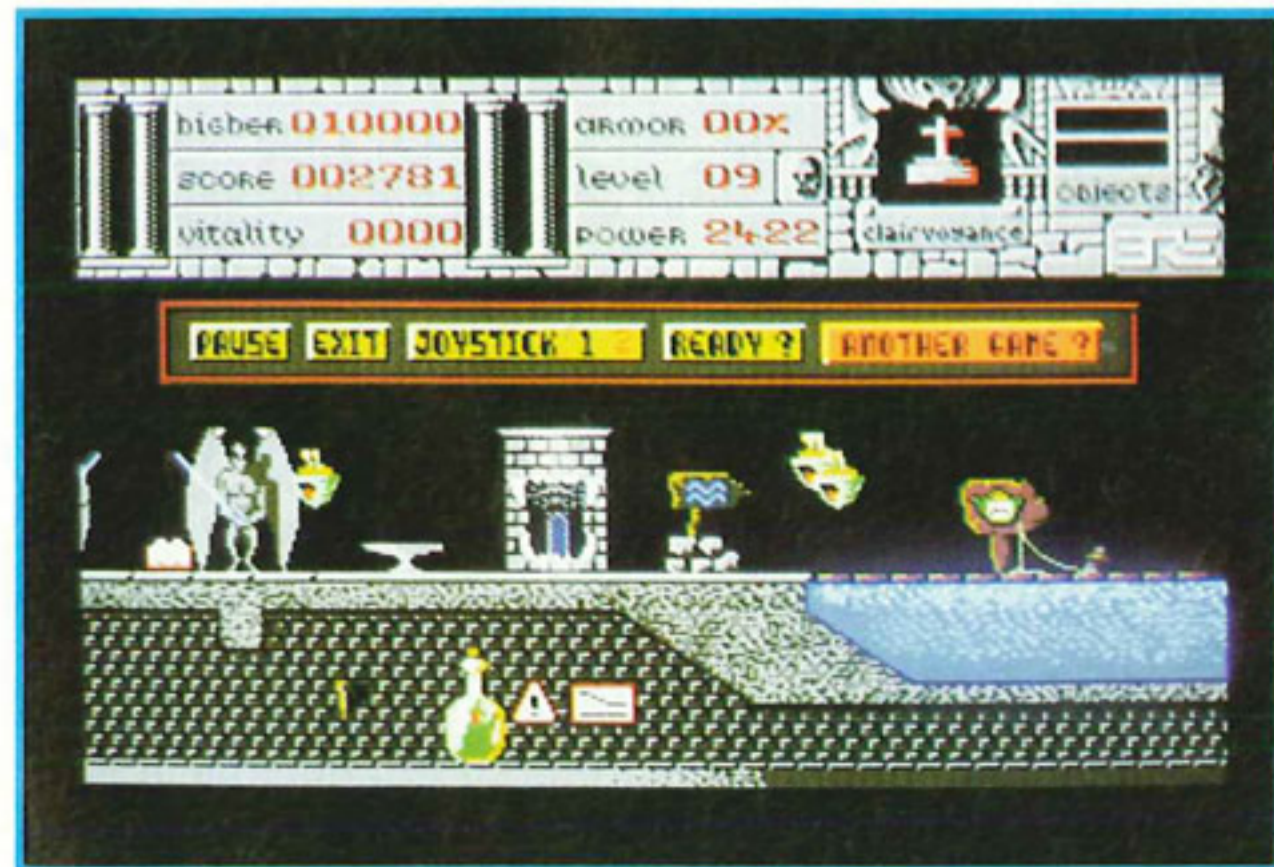
Each screen houses a different scene with a unique background and theme. The wizard can be moved across the entire width of the screen before it scrolls to reveal the next scene. You begin the game in a cemetery with dozens of green-fleshed zombies emerging from the graves and lurching towards the wizard. One fireball destroys a zombie, but their emergence from the graves is constant and relentless. You could stay in the graveyard and annihilate the zombies, but that only achieves a high-score and depletes your vitality and power, every drop of which will be needed to complete the game. Next, you are greeted by green vampire bats and ghosts which emerge from derelict buildings on the following screen. Dropping through a pit into the subterranean world is necessary to collect vital objects, but even greater terrors wait beneath. As you pick up a scroll, a vile flesh-eating fish corners the wizard and rapidly depletes his vitality.

Back on the surface, black-shrouded ghosts haunt you, while blocks of ice threaten to freeze the wizard on contact

and, again, you are forced to seek unsafe refuge beneath the ground, where cyclops and all manner of demons lurk. Destroying a certain type of adversary can yield a clue or object to help you retrieve the stolen KARNA from 'HE whose name cannot be pronounced'! Potions must be collected by moving the wizard over the top of the bottles. Fiendishly, however, the occasional bottle envelops the wizard which ends the game. Perhaps the most distressing experience is dropping into a certain passage-way, where a stone wall

is closing in at one end and a massive stone rolls from the other to crush the wizard. Invariably, the first object you find is a sword, which appears in an inventory at the top of the screen, but there are another seven items which are scattered throughout the game and, with the wizard's ever-decreasing vitality, the final encounter with the infernal powers of darkness is a daunting prospect.

I cannot recommend Warlock's Quest highly enough, it is terrific fun with amusing and horrific characterization, a constant flow of adversaries and fiendish twists which never fail to surprise and trick you. In short, Warlock's Quest is an essential purchase!



STA Rating
72%

GRAPHICS: 75%
SOUND: 60%

ORIGINALITY: 70%
ADDICTIVENESS: 75%

DIFFICULTY: AVE-HARD
1ST DAY SCORE: 26000

TAU CETI

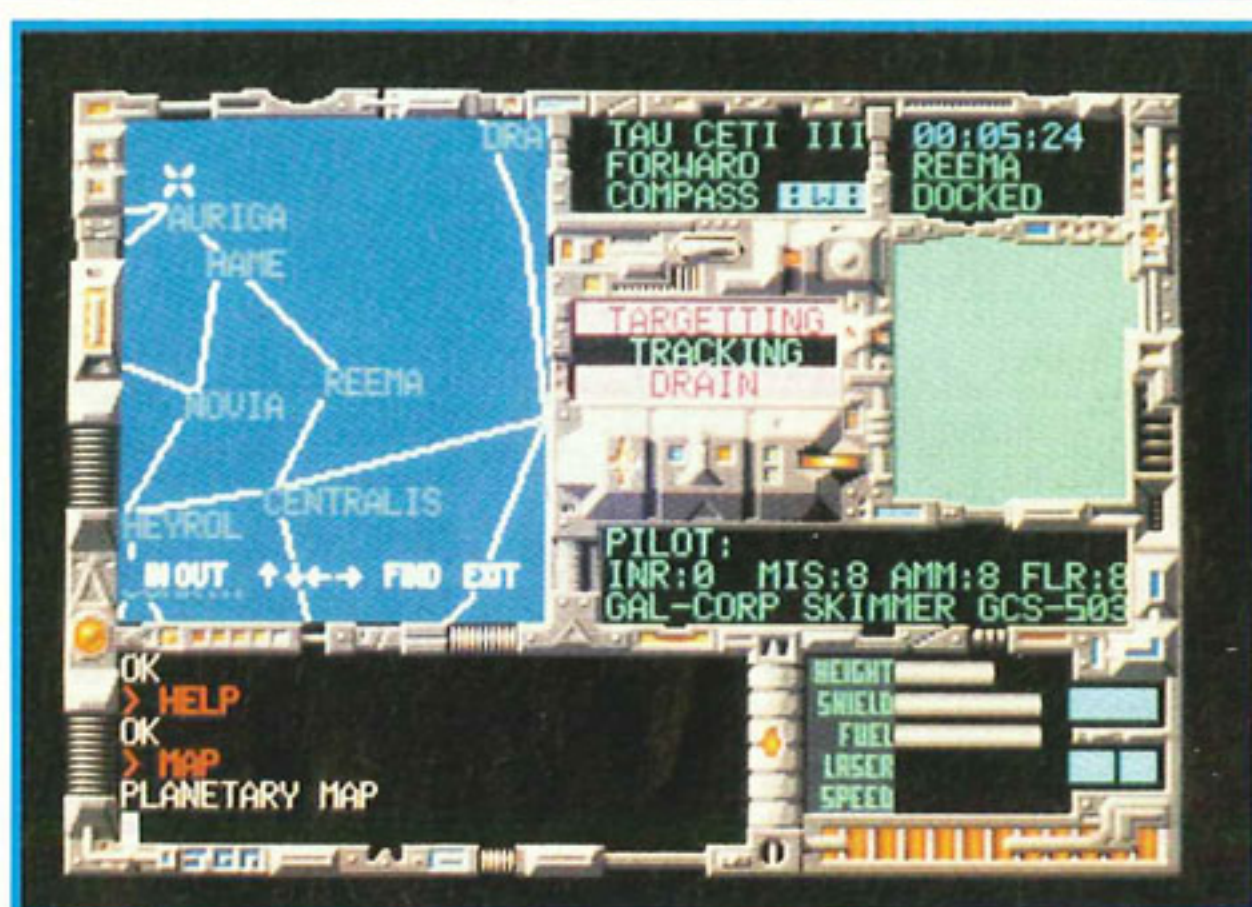
THE EDGE (£19.95)

Tau Ceti's planet defence systems are malfunctioning and all attempts to de-activate them have failed. You are confronted by an array of instrumentation and status displays and, initially, a small game-screen which occupies the top left-hand corner displays a closed airlock door. An instrumentation panel houses a radar that pinpoints the position of all obstacles and buildings on the planet, as well as the numerous deadly droids which constantly skim across the terrain. Beneath the radar, a status-display constantly updates the level of fuel, weaponry resources and shield protection. Beneath the game screen, a message window allows you to communicate with the computer throughout the game.

Pressing the firebutton opens the airlock door and, with the absence of an instruction booklet, typing in 'Help' from a list of screen commands displays the controls and directions. First, you must select and type 'Joystick' for the controls and 'Weaponry Sights'. Typing 'Map' shows the cities in a section of the planet and, once you have

got your bearings, 'Launch' begins the game. Looking through the cockpit window of the so-called Skimmer, the game-screen displays a dark and barren moonscape with a variety of buildings and objects scattered about the terrain.

Moving the joystick forward makes the Skimmer accelerate and you must avoid the many buildings and pylons. The arcade action comes courtesy of the malfunctioning defence systems, which can be pinpointed on the radar. These droids shuttle across the terrain firing double lasers at the Skimmer. The laser tracers, however, give the droid's position away, and before the Skimmer sustains too much damage the droid must be located on the radar and moving the joystick left or right spins the cockpit around to the indicated position. With the droid in your sights, pressing the firebutton activates the laser and a number of direct hits are required to destroy the droid. The task is to locate and de-activate the large fusion reactor which is keeping the hay-wire defence system operational. However, there are no



clues to the position of the reactor and you are constantly preoccupied with the droids. Moving slowly and carefully towards the docking building reveals a multi-coloured doorway and entering the building provides a temporary haven.

The Tau Ceti series of games have never oozed immediate appeal and this one is no exception to that rule. Tau Ceti III needs to be played thoroughly, which requires the patience of Job. The game-play action against the droids keeps you preoccupied and hinders progress towards completing your mission, and you could spend the entire game trying to defend the Skimmer from the droids.

STA
Rating
66%

GRAPHICS: 53%
SOUND: 50%

ORIGINALITY: 62%
ADDICTIVENESS: 65%

DIFFICULTY: HARD
1ST DAY SCORE: N/A

I-BALL

SILVERBIRD (£9.95)

Telecomsoft have just released a series of games on their budget Silverbird range. Shrewdly, they intend to relegate software which, in their opinion, does not warrant the Firebird label, to this secondary label. This will maintain a healthy flow of new releases and Firebird's name for quality. Like all of the games in this series, I, Ball is a traditional

arcade-game, which is aimed specifically at game enthusiasts who are more interested in game-play than graphical presentation. All of the devious tricks have been employed to dampen the player's spirits, such as being forced to return to the beginning of the game if you fail.

I, Ball can best be described as a vertically-scrolling

aerial assault game, although the usual assault craft has been replaced by a spherical character with one eye - hence the title. The game play occupies the left-hand side of the screen, while a status console displays a digital stopwatch and weaponry icons. The ludicrous scenario describes how an evil character called Terry Ball has kidnapped your spherical pals: Lover Ball, Eddy Ball, Glow Ball and No Ball. There are sixteen sections to the game and one of the friendly spheres waits to be rescued at the end of every fourth level. The first section of the game acts as an introduction to the outlandish adversaries, such as, glowing spheres, doughnuts and microwave ovens, which destroy I, Ball on contact.

The screen scrolls relentlessly onwards as you negotiate your way around a changeable terrain, avoiding an ever-increasing throng of adversaries which appear out of thin air. The enemy are harmless until they fully materialize and so it is during this metamorphosis that you must make good your escape and continue with the game. The I, Ball is separately animated from the scrolling screen and can be moved anywhere within the visible screen area. Pressing the firebutton activates a strange

form of repeating weapon which initially issues small coloured balls. Absorbing so-called Power Discs, boosts the effectiveness of the I, Ball's weaponry, with turbo boost guns, horizontal lasers, smart bombs and a rear mounted bullet spray. The game becomes progressively easier as you take on more weaponry and crucial shields afford protection from collision with the enemy.

I was not expecting anything special from I, Ball, but the game-play is traditional arcade fun. If you have a sudden craving for vacuous arcade entertainment, you can enjoy a few hours of entertainment with this game at a price that will remind you of your 8-bit computing days.

STA
Rating
48%

GRAPHICS: 50%
SOUND: 50%

ORIGINALITY: 45%
ADDICTIVENESS: 46%

DIFFICULTY: AVE-HARD
1ST DAY SCORE:



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